

Sara Madron

Amanda Girard

Writing 1310

11, October 2010

Gone Too Soon

We had never been really close, having the bond that most children have with their parents. I had spent my entire childhood calling him Darek as opposed to Dad, which was pretty much unheard of for anyone at elementary age. I longed for the relationship with my father that every other girl in my grade had, however it seemed impossible due to the lack of visitation and communication. It wasn't so much that I didn't want to call him Dad; it was just so awkward to call him something I had never really felt him to be. He and my mother had gotten a divorce when I was only two years old. I had grown up in an environment where my mother only claimed to want better for me, so she remarried a man who was more family suitable and she down talked my father, saying things like, "He drinks too much for you to be around him," and "He used to beat you." While some of that was true, he still loved me and had a right to see me. Plus he wasn't as bad as she made him out to be. My mother tends to exaggerate more than necessary.

My father was a very distinct character but a little quiet. He always wore a cap over his shoulder length dirty blond hair, blue jeans with a hole in the knee, and a t-shirt. His eyes were soft brown with golden flints in them, and his skin was bronze (partially from his Indian descent and to a degree from the California sun.) His smile was broad and gleaming, and his hands were strong and unique. I knew them anywhere. I always remember him being on the road. He loved anything that was related to transportation such as cars, hitch-hiking, and his absolute favorite...trains.

When he would be home for a while (he usually lived with my grandmother), my older sister, Silvia, and I would go over, and he would play with us. I always remember him taking us to the round pond directly beside the house to fish, to the freshly cut, rounded, and lined up hay bales to race, or outside to let our imaginations loose on the concrete sidewalk with colorful chalk and spray each other with the water hose. He was always around but usually kept his distance, almost like he was afraid he would rub off on us if he got any closer for too long of a time. He would more or less watch us play and watch us grow up. That's why I only called him Darek. But as we grew older, he became a little closer, and so did we. He would call and write and try to connect with us on a more personal level. I loved this side of him! This was what I had been missing out on. It took me to the age of twelve to finally start calling him Dad on a regular basis.

It was the beginning of May, and there was an air of excitement in the schools as summer was approaching. In only two weeks, I would be graduating the sixth grade and my father promised me he would come. He had never been to anything of mine. My mother took me to Dillard's to pick out the perfect dress. At this age, I was a real tomboy and I didn't own anything suitable to wear to my graduation. I remember gazing at racks upon racks of the beautiful dresses afraid to touch them, when I spotted the perfect one. It was red and white (our school colors), strapless, and cut off at the knee. He would love this dress! It was the same fire-engine red as his favorite pickup truck.

I can't sleep. My body tosses and turns as I watch the horror play like a movie in my dreams. I am a passenger in an old tan pickup truck with some man who seems to be a friend of mine, and we are heading into town on a curvy road. We are laughing and having a great time, when all of a sudden I look up and we are on a sharp curve face to face with a van that is mistakenly in our lane. The sound of crunching metal and breaking glass fills the air as I am

flung through the windshield into a ditch. I am still breathing, but it hurts; it is a struggle and my chest is searing with an intense pain. I lift my head to see the now damaged vehicles collided and on fire, and stand up clutching my chest where I can feel something warm and sticky covering my hands. I look down only to discover blood painting my hands. They are my father's hands. I wake up screaming and shouting, and it takes a minute for me to realize where I am. The alarm clock on my nightstand shows 2:00 AM; it was only a nightmare. Relieved, my heart rate decreases, and I eventually fall back asleep.

Little did I know then, the next morning I would awaken to find out more about what I thought was only a nightmare. It was a Sunday morning, and I was getting ready to go to church. The phone rang. At that very instant, images from the dream filled my mind and my stomach turned like when you go over a steep hill on a speedy rollercoaster, and my heart pounded really fast. I remember answering it with excitement, because we had caller I.D. and the number that appeared on the screen was my grandmothers. I was eager for her to tell us she wanted us to come down and visit, plus I had a strong, sudden inner desire to see my father, to ensure his well-being.

“Sara, let me talk to your mom,” she said with pain in her voice, as if she was trying to keep something from me. As I handed the phone to my mother, I distinctly remember praying to myself, “God, please don't let it be him. I am just getting to know him. Not yet. Let it be my uncle, my grandfather, anybody.” I knew these prayers seemed selfish, but I already knew what was to come. My chance at a relationship with my father began to slip away with the phone. My heart began to race.

“Hey Ressie, what is going on?” my mother questioned. Immediately, my mother's

attitude changed, and I saw the pain I was feeling spread across her now troubled face as tears began to stream down it. Everything I had just feared had officially been verified by the horrified expression on her face. “Well what happened?” my mother questioned frantically in disbelief. After more silent crying, my mother raised her head and saw the horror on my face.

“Girls, go to your room.”

The whole way to my room, my prayer repeated itself, and I clung to the hope it offered. I waited for what seemed like a lifetime, but could only have been minutes. I heard my mother’s footsteps creaking down the hallway. She entered Silvia’s room first. To my surprise, my brother, who had a different father, walked through my door. I gazed hopefully at the speechless teenager who was supposed to deliver the news. No words came; he only stared at me with a loss of words. My wish had been denied by the simple look. I put my head down, as I felt tears begin to well up in my eyes. A few minutes later, he understood that I had guessed the terrible news and found the courage to tell me what had happened. My father had been in a fatal accident the night before, in which he and two teenagers had passed away at 2:00 AM. Moments later, my mother came in to give me the details of the accident.

“When he was flung from the vehicle, his aorta was severed.”

“What is the aorta?”

“The aorta is the main valve in the heart, and when it gets cut, there is nothing that can be done. He bled internally.”

I hung my head, ashamed of what I was to say next. My father had been the cause of a few drunk-driving accidents, due to what my mother had always described as Dad’s disease, alcoholism. I didn’t know if I could utter the words I was about to say. Reluctantly I asked, “Was it his fault?”

My mother informed me that it was indeed not his fault. The teenagers were the cause of this accident, and they had had some drinks after their prom. On their way home, the catastrophe occurred.

The dream replayed painfully in my mind on the way to the morgue. We had just left my grandmother's house, where I faced countless family members clinging to me as I wept. I remember hugging my Uncle Clayt, who was my father's brother and closest friend. I didn't know who was crying more, me or him. Petrified, I entered my grandmother's house. There were people everywhere, but they didn't register to me as much as my father did. I walked by the fireplace that he always stoked to keep us all warm. I stared at the chair he always rocked while watching silly cartoons with me and my sister. Out of the corner of my eye I caught a glimpse of a photo of my father. I didn't want to forget him, so I looked around and when no one was looking, I placed it in my pocket. I also went into his room and saw the world's greatest dad cup that I had gotten him for Father's Day sitting on his night stand next to a picture of my sister and me, and a bag of "the little flying things," or so we called them. They would fall from the trees, and we would throw them in the air and watch as they spiraled easily toward the ground. At that very moment I felt like one of them, like my life was slowly spiraling towards the ground as everyone else watched.

On the way to the morgue, my mother said we didn't have to see him but we could if we so desired. As we pulled up, still undecided, I unbuckled my seatbelt. I felt like he was stolen from me. I blew all my chances of seeing him my entire childhood, and now more than ever I felt the desire to see him one last time. But I was petrified. I didn't know what he would look like or if he even looked like himself. I entered the building; I had to say goodbye.

It was my turn, and I had to face him alone. The room was tiny, about the size of a small

office that was dimly lit by a tall lamp. There was one blue loveseat on the far wall, and right in the middle there was a table holding his lifeless body. With timidity, I approached the table.

It didn't look like him. His hat was missing, his face white and blood on his chin. Suddenly flashbacks and memories of him filled my mind. But what entered most was regret and fear. I would never have my father be at my graduation, walk me down the aisle and give me away, or have a father-daughter dance. We would never get to go to the zoo like he had promised or ride the train to California like he had always talked about. I gradually felt robbed of a future... and a past. I felt responsible of the whole incident. I should have been there to stop him, to love him. I saw what had happened and I never went over there. If I had been there, he wouldn't have gone out. He would have stayed at home, safe from harm. Without thinking, I reached down and held his ice-cold hand, which had once been strong and warm.

“Goodbye Dad. I love you.” With every word, more pain etched its way into my heart, as I regretfully uttered farewell to my past and the future I had always hoped for.

Every now and then, especially on certain dates like birthdays and Christmas, I go out to the cemetery, which is conveniently located across the road from my grandmother's house. I had requested that my grandmother put an image of a train on the tombstone. I'm not sure why I still go so frequently after six years. I usually find myself sitting on the ground next to it talking pointlessly about what is going on in my life. It's not like he can hear me, but it kind of gives me a certain peace about the whole situation. After all this time, I start to forget the details that made up his hands, the flints of gold that were in his eyes, and the curves of his face. But when I'm there, I can see his face and remember him better. I like to imagine him riding his long black train waving at me as it chugs towards Heaven.