

Assignment: Write a memoir about a person important to you. Dramatize your relationship with this person.

A Growing Love
by Ewa J. Pasterski

It was November 7, the day of my father's funeral. It rained, but I do not remember getting wet. We walked slowly, almost in slow motion, into the colorless church in the middle of nowhere. I did not hear a sound. No one was smiling. People's mouths moved, but the words were inaudible. All birds had escaped somewhere. The clock seemed to keep pace with the rain. I walked, but my feet did not touch the muddy ground. I was numb. Only twelve, I was too young to comprehend, yet old enough that I would never forget. My real understanding came years later: my father's presence had a large impact on me, and his philosophy of life still lingers deep inside me.

Even though many years have gone by, the memory of my father is still alive, like a timeless story. I keep in my mind the picture of his incredible eyes and beloved face. Some say he looked like a movie star: tall, firm, and handsome. My father always kept his hair the same way: short with the bangs combed back, like Humphrey Bogart in "Casablanca." He was a strong, muscular man, but what I remember most was his gentle touch.

My memory of my time with my father is full of discoveries and excursions and lifetime experiences that can only occur between a father and a daughter. It was he who showed me for the first time the beauty of my native town of Cracow and its unforgettable views, such as Vavel Castle. From the opposite side of the river he showed me its monumental architecture from hundreds of years ago, like a perfect beauty from a fairy tale story. At the base of the castle's foundation, the Vistula River, like a gentle snake, writhed around it to protect the heart of the town from enemy forces. I also remember walks down the old, narrow streets in Cracow, filled with the history of people and events from hundreds of years ago. Walking down these streets, I always search for our previous tracks lost somewhere in the past, like unwritten stories. He was teaching me how to perceive, how to discover and see things invisible to others. His words were like the sound of music. Once he asked, almost whispering in my ear, "Do you feel the power of past generations?" I did not even know how to answer.

There are many little things that I still remember about him. On frosty Sundays, he liked to take me for a hot cup of tea in the café at the corner. This picture comes back to me every time I pass that place. A few times, I glanced inside but there was nobody sitting in his chair. Also, I remember the sentence he used to say to me: "There is something inside each of us, a dreaming passion that we have to look for and find before we die." He was this way, deep and introspective. Moreover, I remember the kisses that he gave me every night before I slept. Only after he had gone did I realize that it was nearly impossible to sleep without them. Nonetheless, I deeply enjoyed all the moments we shared, such as drinking ice-cold water straight from a mountain spring, picking wild flowers from a little wood-glad, or watching bright stars hung on a cloudless sky.

There was something special about the way he talked and looked at me that made me feel his love. I could run to him with all my problems and fears; he was not just a parent but a friend as well. It was a special connection between a father and a daughter built on respect, love, and understanding. Even though I had to share his attention with my twin sister, I was always the first who got a little smile from him, and the first who found a free space on his lap. But it was also I who on dark, rainy evenings waited for him with my nose stuck to the cold glass of the window. And he knew it. I was hungry for more, much more time exclusively offered to me. My father worked all day long; he was always gone before I woke; and he came back when the sun was down. So it was impossible for me to see him as often as I wanted to. Sometimes, I admit to myself, I did not try to know him better. I did not expect that days with my father might be limited, irretrievably cut off like a wonderful dream gone when I woke.

The first day of his sickness was cloudy and cold. It seemed to me that the skies agreed with the circumstance. The doctor's voice tore my ears: "A stroke has paralyzed him. He will live, but he will not

walk again.” His words were like a nightmare; it seemed to me as if someone had cut off the wings of a bird. All that I saw at this moment was a vision of the two of us walking down the street and the feeling that those days were over. I grasped his hands firmly, and for the first time I realized how much I loved him. I would pay any price to keep him alive, but I was not sure what he was wishing for. His unhappiness was painful for me.

A few weeks later, exactly when night changes to day, my father died. When he was ready to go, the window of the small hospital room opened rapidly as if someone had come to take him away, far away from me and forever. First of all, I did not believe what had happened, or I did not want to believe. We had so many things to do together and so many plans for the future. Afterwards, I had nothing left, only a painful, empty hole in my heart. Finally, I came to know my life would never be the same.

I do not know exactly when or how, but as I live my life little by little, I have come to realize the influence my father has had on me. At some point, I faced the reality that it was impossible to see those gentle eyes again. His death was as if someone had torn the roof off the house and left me unprotected from the rain. Not only did I lose my father, but also I lost my friend. I realized that our secret relationship was founded on his sheltering protection over me. I lost those strong, safe arms that I used to run to, and I lost those eyes where I could find all the answers. Now that I am an adult, I miss those days even more. I sometimes think how my life might be now with him, but I can only imagine. One day I came to know that even though he is not next to me anymore, my love and admiration for him are still growing.

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