

Everything Taken Apart

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A reflection of realistic events surrounding a child's suffering of significant loss. This short narrative invites and excites readers to see life through the eyes of a trying nine-year-old boy. After losing his father to medical complications, the narrator contemplates the answers to the most asked questions.

Published on
Booksie

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In that moment, screw by screw, I felt the excitement. Each piece of plastic was being peeled off the truck. Maybe it was curiosity that motivated me to see what something looked like completely disassembled, to figure out what made it so loud and so awesome. The big black rig didn't have any cargo on it. Its giant silver blow horns were both magnificent and shining, meaning business to anyone who saw it. The windshield was huge and took up more than half the front of the truck, containing a clock inside that showed the current second, minute, and hour of any given moment. I can't remember what the time was when the second hand no longer moved forward and the screws came out the backside. After the initial screws were taken out and the plastic peeled off I took out the loud radio. That was the source of the obnoxiously loud horn that sounded the new morning from up on the dresser across the room. I would wake up in a panic, searching for my dad to save me from the truck about to squash me on the highway where I was playing.

Right around this time my dad had taken a turn for the worse at the hospital. It was scary going into see my dad, all the doctors in white and nurses in blue running around helping all the people. All of them stuck in a place that smelled like old people in the retirement home when we go visit and sing Christmas Carols as a church group. My dad needed surgeries in order to fix the blood clot in his brain. The first time a stroke happened, my dad was around nine years old, like I was when he died. He was running up and down the stairs to get a brush and then a book for his sister when he collapsed. After, his left side was paralyzed and the fingers in his left hand became a fist, and he had to lunge his left leg forward when he walked. Still, that didn't stop him from being able to go home and live normally, put back together enough to last another 34 years.

Playing sports was not only a hobby but a passion for my dad. I wondered what all the other kids thought when my dad joined the basketball and track teams at high school. As a kid looking up to my dad, I would never guess he was handicapped. He would beat me in basketball on our miniature court in the driveway, with the old rusty black hoop he had gotten for free from a buddy when his friend upgraded his own court. Then there was the way my dad would slug out the baseball into the neighbor's yard and run around the bases of trash-can-lids in the backyard. When he suddenly fell over during lunch at the high school where he taught History, all the sports disappeared and I stayed in my room.

As I sat there with my toy, all the pieces torn apart, it struck me that this truck would never be the same. Hopelessly, I stared at all the tiny black and silver things that had kept this truck in perfect condition. My sense of wonder was completely gone and an overwhelming feeling of disappointment swept over my entire body. Then the tears began. I didn't want to be on the blue carpet, I didn't want my dad's brown desk with a bookshelf on top in my room. My blue and red bed that could also be a couch with giant pillows made me mad. Everything in my room sucked and I hated everything and I had to escape.

I wiped off my face and went down the hall into my sister's room. My little sister Mary was the most oblivious to what was going on. My older sister Priscilla knew the most, and I tried to ignore the situation. When the three of us played together Mary asked, "When's Papa coming home? What's making him sick?" Priscilla did her best not to choke up or make Mary feel like anything too serious was going on and said, "The doctor is making sure he doesn't have another accident so they're watching him for a while." This made me sadder since my mom already told me and Priscilla that my dad probably wouldn't make it back.

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The last time I saw my dad awake he was in his own hospital room. The room was all white and had a very large bathroom. There was a tray on wheels with food on it and flowers on the nightstand. I begged to turn cartoons on the T.V hanging from the wall across the bed. My dad handed me the remote and I saw a needle taped into his arm that was connected to the machines on the left side with computer monitors. After my mom put Mary on the bed, my dad talked to her in a soft voice. Then, my dad said, "Abraham turn off the T.V and come here." I didn't feel like going until my mom sternly said, "Now!". Quickly I jumped up, turned off the T.V and sat up on the bed on my dad's left side. The smell of vanilla pudding and weird meat went into my nose. My dad cleared his throat and then spoke.

"Son, take care of your mother and your sisters. Love God and go to college. Remember to be a gentleman. Do everything with your heart and follow your dreams. You're the man of the house so make sure everyone is happy. I love you."

"I love you too Papa," I whispered.

The next time I saw my dad he couldn't breathe by himself, he wasn't awake, and didn't look alive. There were blue tubes coming out of his mouth and three times as many machines in the room. He was in a new part of the hospital where everyone was quiet. I never got another chance to tell my dad how sorry I was for all the bad things I had done. This one time I disobeyed him and snuck out of my room window above my bed to go to 7-11 for candy. Another time I told him he was stupid for not letting me go outside and play. I just wanted to tell my dad he was the smartest person I knew and he was my hero.

So the truck sat on my bedroom floor for weeks untouched and unnoticed. One day I finally went back inside my room and gathered up the pieces, putting some back together and throwing the rest into a bag, storing it in my garage. That was the day everything didn't seem so different anymore, normal was no longer a desire. My mom had come back and picked my sisters and me up from her friends after she had spent a few weeks away. She wanted to be with us again and would read to us at night. We would push the coffee table away from the couch and spread out blankets. My mom would settle herself on the brown couch above us and read *Deadline*. The book was about a man who dies and watches his family from heaven and tries to keep them safe. All four of us stayed close during that time and I've always cherished my mom for putting us back together.

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