

Alexandra Samargia

Column 1

John Fountain

The “typical” family consists of a father, mother and two kids, one boy and one girl. This is what most would expect from someone who appears to have everything together. I never really understood that my family was different, until I started meeting more and more people with the “typical” family. It wasn’t until 1<sup>st</sup> grade, when we all got a flyer for my hometown’s annual father daughter dance. I took a minute to stop and think: *But I don’t have a father.*

I brought home the flyer to my single mom, who looked at it with sympathy in her eyes. Like the mother she is, just by looking in her only child’s sad eyes, I was finally realizing what it was like to have not have a dad. The word “dad” in fact, made me wince because I only used it when I was talking about you.

Mom never hid from me where you were, and why you weren’t here to take care of me, she was always honest when she would answer my questions about who you were.

Hon·est

*Adjective*

Free of deceit and untruthfulness; sincere; something you aren’t.

Mom reminded me of this when I came home with the flyer, then asked if she would like her to go with me. I shook my head and said I didn’t really want to go anyway. She kissed my head and gave me a hug. Ask I walked up the attic stairs to my room, I wondered what life would have been like had you been here. Back then I pictured it to be magical, the three of us going for bike rides and picnics, playing board games for 3+ players, and going to that damn father daughter dance.

Later that year, I was finally learning to read and spell, something that would help in my love for writing. I used to write all kinds of stories, especially ones that would have illustrations because I also loved to draw and paint. So, learning to read and spell helped me so much in expanding my creativity.

I remember walking home from school one day because we only lived a few blocks away and mom’s class she was taking ran late. We both got home around the same time, and she was on the phone with my nana. She said you were in J-A-I-L. We learned that word a couple weeks earlier, and I looked up at her with a confused look. She instantly realized that now would be the time to tell me a big aspect about you.

Mom quickly got off the phone and sat me down on our big green comfy couch. The couch we would fall asleep on watching movies on Friday nights. The couch I would lay on when I was sick. The couch we would build forts in, just the two of us. She explained to me that you were in jail because you got in trouble with the police. I didn’t ask any further questions; I just nodded my head.

The only thing I didn’t understand is why you were in jail. I thought only bad people were in jail, so did that mean you were bad?

It was shortly after this I began having severe separation anxiety from mom to the point of having panic attacks before anything involving not being with mom, including school. I was so embarrassed of myself, always crying in school and having to be held down by the school counselor so I wouldn't run after my mom as she tried to leave.

Mom finally brought me in to see a child psychologist- one that I would then see for 10 years. His name was Dr. Cole. He was a nice older man, who was frail and gentle. He always had all white hair, and lots of toys in his office. He only had two paintings on the walls, and only a couple of sticky notes on the bulletin board. The rug had Aztec style patchwork on it. I would follow the lines and shapes all the way around at least 23 times during the session. I spent a lot of time looking down at the rug.

Dr. Cole explained to me that my 'worry' is trying to take control of our house. He said that if I did the opposite of what it was telling me to do then he would get smaller. I pictured him like a little bug that would inflate if I allowed him to.

I called "worry" a him because I thought all men were bad since, *you* were.