

BIKE

There are training wheels still on my bike. My five-year-old eyes are fixed on the back of my dad's already balding head. We are heading down to the elementary school so I can swing, and the only way he'd agree to take me was if I biked there with him.

"Almost ready to take those training wheels off, huh?" My dad asked before we started our trek to the playground.

I shook my head aggressively. Riding a bike was still scary with the training wheels; the thought of them coming off was terrifying.

Now I was pedaling my pink Barbie bike down the steep hill to my elementary school, and I had gotten a sudden surge of confidence and pedaled faster.

Before I know it my front wheel is colliding with my dad's back wheel, and I am soaring through the air. The only thing that greets me on my descent is the hot mid-July Iowa asphalt. My forearms scream as the first few layers of skin are peeled off like potatoes. My bike—still upright thanks to my training wheels—scoots its way down the hill while I scream in agony on the ground.

My dad finishes riding down the hill, parks his bike, and slowly makes his way to me. No rushing. Just walking. He squats down and puts his hand on my shoulder.

"You're tough. Stand up."

I place my scratched up palms on the ground and heave my little body into standing position. My dad takes his water bottle, douses my arms, and dries the bloody water off with the hem of his grey tank top.

"Now I thought we were here to swing," he says and takes off in a dead sprint to the backside of the school. Tears are still streaming down my face as he begins to disappear from view.

"Oh, I hope the red swing is open," he calls back as he rounds the corner, vanishing completely.

Dad knows that is my favorite swing. The pain in my arms fades, my tears evaporate, and I chase after him.

My bike waits at the bottom of the hill.