When the bad guys are good guys

    Recently I saw a very great movie titled Moonlight at AMC Theater.  It was a very rare portrayal of the life that many black men live, a life lacking another human's touch and perception that they need to be “hard.”  One of the protagonists is a “bad guy.”  They show us he’s a “bad guy,” a drug dealer who causes destruction in the black community.  Through the course of the film this drug dealer's helps a young boy who is neglected, unsupported and struggling with his sexuality.  After viewing the film I really got to thinking about “bad guys” that aren’t bad guys like my late father. My father was black Rastafarian Englishman of Barbadian descent and stood at 6’ 4” tall. In my childhood he often wore a mustache and beard and his long Locks reached about midway down his back. He was muscular and sporty and in childhood I often accompanied him to play basketball at the park on the indoor court. After a series of events throughout our lives I was left wondering was my father a villain or a hero?

    My father was very caring and was and still is quite a mystery to me yet remains one of my favorite people.  He helped everyone he could and he took care of family to a fault bring upon codependency.  Once when I was about eight my dad took my two cousins and I swimming at his mom’s pool.  My cousin Sherry was adamant that she could swim.  So the three children began swimming and dad supervised but It became very apparent Sherry could not swim/ she was not a strong swimmer and she began going into distress.  My father quickly tripped off his jeans and tennis shoes and jumped in to get her.  He emerged with Sherry gasping.  he made sure she was okay and gave her to my grand.  None of the other adults could swim and they were thankful she was safe.  After the ordeal my father discover his watch was destroyed.  Nowa's as a child looking back I always recall how much my dad loved that watch and that it must have been very expensive knowing my dad and he didn’t even think about taking it off because Sherry was in distress.  Maybe it was just his instincts kicking in but I like to think it was just a pure demonstration of my dad’s character.

    As far back as I can remember I never knew what my dad did for work but he was always traveling, and burning small slips of paper with sequences of numbers on them and extinguishing them in the toilet. He always had a mobile phone plastered to his head talking shop with some of his “co-workers” and kept a glove box of charged extra batteries.  Whatever it was it was very illegal and one day some of his “business partners” robbed the house fully armed while he was gone holing the inhabitants hostage at gunpoint.  The police were called and then household was relocated shortly after. From the robbery on he carried a gun in his brief case \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_by the intrusion. After the robbery my dad said we had to move and we relocated to an apartment

    My second year of school at otis there came a semester I was short on tuition and money for books.  I called my father and he didn’t have the money but said he would get it to me; within few days he told me to go to monogram to collect the few hundred he had sent me.  He did that for any and everyone he could and frequently sent money to Guana, New York, Florida, Barbados, and Trinidad.  If my dd was eating we were all eating and eating well.

Several years ago my father fell ill from a very aggressive metastatic head and neck cancer and had to undergo extensive surgeries including removing a large portion of his mouth, jaw, teeth in one quadrant of his mouth, and then bone and skin grafts being taken from his leg for reconstruction all of which were unsuccessful.  At this stage he could scarcely talk and could not eat unless his food was liquidized.  He was walking on crutches and I had come to England to visit and take care of him when I began feeling ill.  He took it upon himself to make me a quite delicious curry which he could not himself eat since he could not chew, but also because he added chicken for me which he did not eat since he was a pescatarian. A dietary choice he made after growing up on a farm in Barbados after witnessing chickens peck each other to death.  He apologized while presenting the meal saying it wasn’t his best, but it was incredible and made with a lot of love. Myself and my family have collectively wondered if the cancer was caused by his extensive mobile phone use.

While living in the states, and all his life for that matter my father loved sushi!  In the 90’s we would go to the sushi bar every single Friday to the same restaurant and sit at the bar.  My father would buy the chief sake all night and they would make special dishes for the family that weren’t on the menu.  After the sushi bar was closed we would still be in there my father and his wife laughing heart full bellied laughs and talking the night away as I slept across a few chairs.  Each year at Christmas the family would receive a gift from the head chef.

    After my father passed away his girlfriend revealed that my dad was a drug dealer.  And it was very hard to reconcile the fact that someone who was so generous, compassionate and fierce was a drug dealer.  But then again reflecting on all the enigmatic, gas lighting moments over the years I suppose I can’t be too shocked.  Although he did many bad things I do believe that at his core my dad was a good person. He didn’t always make the best choices and did the best he could with what he had. I hate to say it but I do often wonder if the cancer was just Karma rearing her ugly head. And it was quite possibly always his destiny to live fast and die young at the tender age of 52 years old.