

SPIN IT!

On the morning my dad died and on the night I was born, there was a snowstorm. There was a man, very small and far away, outside of the hospital room, shoveling snow in a parking lot. Whatever he managed to move was quickly replaced. The snow only really let up on the way home.

On my way down to the hospital, I listened to Colin Stetson's piece *The Lighthouse I*, again and again and again and again, looping for the hour-long drive. It's a song that calms me down. Centers me, or something. Stetson wrote it about his dad's death. Once in the hospital, confronted with mine's, the last bit of melody in the piece echoed between my ears, ringing low and quiet. Between nothingwords and kaleidoscoped, wracked sobs, I whistled it. Low and quiet. Hopefully unassuming and desperate for stillness. Like many things I've tried to hide which I would later be grateful he picked up on, my dad heard this. He was between two worlds at this point, but I guess I shouldn't be surprised that music spurred his last request.

He asked me to come closer, and then asked his closest family, who were all, by some sublime grace, there, to whistle the fragmented melody with me. My grandmother began to sing, our voices wobbling; shaking, used-up. He said: "Just whistle...all of you...just take it and SPIN IT...yeah, that's it..."

We all sang in some unstable unison. Six notes, again, again, again, again. He sang too, and we joined hands, all of us. That melody keeps this piece from falling apart at the seams; it is the melody which forces its way in, out, and around it. As we sang, he cried out: "we're all doing this together! It's unbelievable!!" And later, "GO BLUE!!!"

I don't know if this piece can be said to be about my dad, in entirety. I don't know if anything can fully encapsulate a person. But it is certainly about that moment, and what it says about him. It's about cancer and it's about drowning in whitewater grief. It's about skidding into the grave, thoroughly used up, worn out, leaking oil, and shouting GERONIMO!!!

It's about taking some kickass music and spinning it, man.

All joined by flesh, connected by it all, it ends. Ended. Every cell screams, as Leland Palmer would say. But screaming is surely better than silence.