

DEAR FATHER

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To the man who gave me life, a hollow start,
You were the architect who broke my heart.
Not with a sudden crash, a lightning strike,
But with a slow erosion, a silent hike
Up a lonely hill, where I walked alone,
Searching for a comfort I never found at home.

You were there in body, a present ghost,
But your absence in spirit hurt the most.
The words "I love you" I never truly heard,
Just silence and the sting of every word
Left unsaid; the care you failed to show,
A garden of my trust you let not grow.

You built a wall where a door should have been,
A fortress where a father should have seen
The child needing shelter, guidance, light;
Instead, I learned to fear the endless night.
I longed for an anchor, a steady hand,
But found myself adrift in a barren land.

My heart is a mosaic of shattered glass,
Reflecting all the moments you let pass.
The little girl inside me still asks why—
Why you couldn't stay, not just physically, but high
In spirit, in a love that felt secure and vast.
Instead, you shaped my future from your past.

I am broken by the things you didn't do,
The father I needed, the one I never knew.
I'm learning now to build myself anew,
A structure of my own, a stronger, truer view.
But the cracks remain, a map of all your blame,
And a quiet sadness echoes at your name.

AJ

(she/her)

My father's departure left a void that I eventually filled with words. This poem is a reflection of that, and I am entering it based on the encouragement of friends who believe my writing has a future.

When my father left at age two, he left behind a silence I could only learn to fill with my own voice. This poem is the result of that long conversation with his absence, a piece I'm finally sharing after years of my friends insisting that my words were meant for more than just a page. This poem explores the emotional impact of my father's departure when I was two, serving as a reflection on how I used writing to navigate that absence. While a stepfather entered my life, he couldn't bridge the gap left by the man who was supposed to stay. Growing up as the child of a father who walked away is a unique weight, no matter who fills the seat at the table, the empty space in your history remains. This poem explores the distinction between having a guardian and having a father, and the lingering question that a replacement can never quite answer.

