

Father's Day

By

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INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

RUDY - eight years old - a cute "nerd child" wearing thick glasses - sits at a table. Wall tones are consistent with the marshmallow colors of children cereals.

RUDY
(after thinking hard)
Dad. Why don't we have books in our house?

He squints, looking up at his father, as if into a large light.

FATHER - grimacing - slings nasty, burnt eggs - a cigarette hanging from his mouth. Ashes fall intermittently into the eggs. A burnt piece of toast POPS up in the toaster.

He is hung over, hates life, and is bitterly annoyed at his kid, who specifically gets on his nerves on a daily basis.

FATHER
What?

RUDY
Books. You know: *novels*. Lucas's house has all sorts of books. Books all over the place... mysteries, fiction, nonfiction... everything. And Robin's parents' house has a library. A whole room just filled with books.
(looks around hopelessly)
There's nothing here- not even a bible... Robin says it's weird.

FATHER
Robin. She's the Christian one?

ROBIN
Her family goes to CHURCH, if that's what you mean.

FATHER
Yeah, well. As far as the bible goes: did you tell Robin that sometimes grown-ups have *issues* with her pal Jesus? - that life isn't always just smiles and roses?

RUDY
I told her that when mom died you gave up on religion, and that when
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RUDY (cont'd)
I was younger I used to think Jesus
was just another ornament people
brought out during Christmas time,
like the snowman, or Santa.

FATHER tenaciously scrapes a glob of butter against the
black toast and tosses it on a plate in front of Rudy. RUDY
grimaces, trying not to.

FATHER
Boin appetito'.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Sun streams in the windows. We follow a trail of beer cans,
soy sauce wrappers, and empty cigarettes boxes to where
FATHER is lying on his face, passed out but coming to. The
silence we wait in paints the mood of their everyday.

INT. KITCHEN

RUDY - wearing an apron - removes a tray of fresh chocolate
chip cookies he's made himself. He dusts the black part of
the toast off with a knife... sets up a plate: toast and
cookies.

On first bite, FATHER appears in the hallway, looking like
he's about to murder. Limp, too drunk to do it. Holding a
beer.

FATHER
Cookies for breakfast again, huh?

RUDY
(smiles)
All the food groups.

FATHER
(suddenly furious)
It's no joke, Rudy! I'm serious!
Sugar's poison!
(points)
That stuff'll kill ya!

RUDY
You're making that up.

FATHER gulps some beer.

(CONTINUED)

FATHER

You ever heard of diabetes?

(RUDY innocently nods no)

Yeah, well. They get it from eating too many cookies and crap. First you get fat. Then real fat. Then a doctor comes in one day and hacks your legs off.

RUDY looks down, sneaking a bite. FATHER enters the room, notices an old family picture on the table. It is of when they were happy: FATHER, MOTHER, and RUDY.

FATHER

What's this?

No answer.

FATHER

Rudy...

No answer.

FATHER

Rudy!

RUDY

She used to make me cookies. It reminded me of her. I just thought-

FATHER - intensified - scurries over to a drawer, yanks it open, retrieves scissors, comes back, slaps them down. RUDY looks at him as if he's insane. FATHER - panting - does look crazy. He looks down, suddenly sincere.

FATHER

What do we do with the pain?

RUDY looks away. FATHER tips his chin so to force Rudy to look at him.

FATHER

What do we do with the pain, Rudy?

RUDY

(softly)

Cut it out.

FATHER

What?

(CONTINUED)

RUDY
Cut it out.

FATHER nods, hands him the scissors.

FATHER
That's right.

RUDY reluctantly cuts his mother's face out of the picture.

INT. DINING ROOM

A series of family pics with the mother's face cut out line the wall. FATHER stares at them as RUDY stands on a chair, tacking up a new one.

FATHER
(drunk, barely able to hold
his head up)
Hey. What day is it?

RUDY
(thinks)
I think it's Monday.

FATHER nods.

FATHER
Ya going to school?

RUDY
Funny.

FATHER nods. He drifts off; there is a long pause

FATHER
Yeah- you know, in retrospect,
probably shoulda' never had kids.
But your mother -
(laughs)
she - well - we weren't gonna have
any - we lost one, you know. It was
too much, seeing that... too much
for me. Too much for your mother.
So- after that we were like...
RELIGIOUS with rubbers. But - and
stop me if you've heard the story -
one day your mother walks into a
bar - she meets this old woman who
sobs on her shoulder about how she
wished she and her husband had had
kids and how now, with menopause,
it's too late.

(CONTINUED)

(nods, laughs, salutes)
Closed for business.

RUDY
What's ment- o pause?

FATHER
(laughs)
The truth is gross, Rudy. So I'll spare you....
(thinks of an alternative)
... okay. You know that stork, the one that brings babies? *Ment-opause* is when the stork's wings fall off..... no more kids.

RUDY frowns, digesting this.

FATHER
Anyway. Your mother comes out of the bar a different woman. I swear, it was as if that old post-menopausal BAG had pressed a button inside her head. After that all she talked about was having a baby. And so - here you are. ..

He looks creepily at RUDY, the hate showing a little. RUDY swallows, uncomfortable as he takes a place on the floor.

FATHER
Your mother thought having a kid would be sunshine and roses; we both did. But, as everybody knows: everything life gives life takes away - when it took her instead of you well - I mean, it was either her or you and she made the decision - not that I wanted you to die of course, it's just that.... I sure as hell didn't want to lose her... Now look at us. I mean here you are: bookish, interested in Science and maps and things. And here I am, a sort of drunk Indiana Jones who's traded his whip in for a 401 k and a MORTGAGE. I mean, WHAT THE HELL?

A moment passes. FATHER ruffles through a paper bag and pulls out whiskey and two shot glasses.

(CONTINUED)

FATHER

Okay. Come on. Come over here.
(pats the seat next to him)
This is important.

RUDY skeptically takes the seat next to him.

FATHER

*Let's take a shot... your first
shot. Just you and your old man.*

RUDY - terrified - looks at him.

RUDY

Dad... I'm eight.

FATHER

*Come on. For mommy... for dead
mommy... ...for our... missing
puzzle piece.*

RUDY nervously watches as FATHER pours the shots and hands one to him.

FATHER cheers and they put them back, the kid gagging as FATHER laughs.

We meditate on RUDY as he recovers from the shot, wiping his mouth and grimacing. We stay on him as he digests the moment.

FATHER is passed out now.

RUDY waits and - suddenly angry- glares at his father as he takes another... and another.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Birds sing outside the window. The room is out of focus. He drowsily (and hung over for the first time in his life) puts on his glasses. The room's empty. RUDY- starting to panic - searches the house, notices things are missing. There's no car in the driveway; the closet's empty of his father's clothes.

He sees an envelope on the kitchen table with "RUDY" written on it. He stares at it, rather dismal.

EXT. FORREST AREA --

RUDY walks through the sunlit greenery, looking very small. Wearing a backpack and sadly eating gummy worms. He comes upon a tree with a tree house... climbs up it.

INT. TREE HOUSE

This is where he spends his time: it is interesting inside: a collage of cultural references lit by Christmas lights... records, maps, tons of books.

RUDY takes a breath, sits on the edge, looks out at the land below. Opens the envelope. In it, on the piece of paper, written in huge font, is the word: "Goodbye"

He digests this, his legs dangling...

He takes a globe in his hand, looks at the world and all its possibilities.

He spins it. It spins furiously.

END