

4 January 2019

Dear Fredrik Backman,

My whole childhood I sought refuge in the companionship of my father. He was a kind man but not without acknowledged flaws. He lived his life full of regrets but in no way empty of love. I took him for granted, I was enchanted by the persuasive selfishness of young adulthood and to me he was just my father. The father who would sing with me in the car and yell at me during my basketball games and console me when my heart hurt. I did not yet understand until I read your book that my father was the personification of family and human connection. He would villainize himself just so my mother would not be considered the villain, he would hide away his pain so I could not feel it, and he would dust me off and put me back on my feet before I even knew I was falling. He was home, he was what I never felt I had and what I was too ungrateful to see.

Before my father died I read aloud to him a quote from your book I had felt changed me the most. He smiled when I got done reading it. I told him it was the quote I was going to use in my future wedding vows. And although I thought he would, he did not laugh at my childish naivety or discourage my optimism. He did not laugh because to him naivety and optimism were among the things that truly defined love, and he knew love.

Not long after I read the quote from your book did my father die. He had a heart attack, something not uncommon in his lineage. Something I knew before I knew. I knew he had died because I felt the ache in my heart the same time he felt the ache in his, and I saw the world shatter the same time his world disappeared. We were quick to set up the funeral arrangements because without my father there was nothing more important. It was not until three days before the funeral that I decided that I wanted to deliver a eulogy. Many were skeptical and worried I would not be able to capture my father in the adolescent words that I had acquired throughout my lifetime. I was not, because this is when your book gave me the insight that I knew no one but my father and I understood. And so on the day of my fathers funeral I read the very same quote I read to my father, “‘Loving someone is like moving into a house,’ Sonja used to say. ‘At first you fall in love with all the new things, amazed every morning that all this belongs to you, as if fearing that someone would suddenly come rushing in through the door to explain that a terrible mistake had been made... Then over the years the walls become weathered, the wood splinters here and there, and you start to love that house not so much because of all its perfection, but rather for its imperfections...These are the little secrets that make it your home.’”

A Man Called Ove was a prophecy I did not yet know at that time was destined for me. Your story helped me discover the little secrets that made my father home. He was the walls that were weathered and the wood splinters that were here and there. Your book carried with it the meaning of my life and happiness. And above all your book provided me with the last conversation I will ever have with my father, and I am indebted to you for that privilege.

Word Count: 618