

Dad, With You
in My Heart
I Carry On

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Introduction

There are books you don't find. They find you. Maybe you were looking for this book. Maybe it was given to you as a gift. Or maybe it simply found you, at a moment when you felt that something was missing, something that nothing in this world could ever replace.

If you're reading these lines, it's probably because your dad is no longer here. The man who taught you what it means to get back up after you've fallen. Whose shoulders were once the safest place you knew. Who may not always have found the right words, but whose very presence often said more than a thousand words.

Maybe it was just a few days ago. Maybe a few months. Maybe you've been carrying this loss with you for years and wonder why it still weighs so heavily on you. It doesn't matter how much time has passed. Some wounds don't heal according to a calendar. And missing your dad is one of those things that can't be divided into phases.

This book won't explain how grief works. It won't lay out steps for you to follow or set a timeline.

It won't pretend that somewhere there's a formula that could make sense of the pain or make it disappear. Because the loss of a father doesn't follow a textbook.

It's rough and tender at the same time. It finds you in the morning in the shower and at night as you're drifting off to sleep. It lurks in birthday cards that no one signs anymore, and in decisions where you miss his perspective. It's everywhere and yet impossible to grasp.

What you'll find in the coming chapters isn't advice. They're words that try to name what so often feels nameless. Reflections on missing someone, on the emptiness, and on all the invisible threads that still connect you to him. Some will feel as though someone has looked straight into your heart. Others will pass you by. Both are okay.

After each chapter, you'll find questions waiting for you. They're not a test or goal you have to reach. Just an invitation to pause and listen within. You don't need ready-made answers. Sometimes it's enough to simply let a question stay with you without answering it. Silence, too, is an answer.

Read this book in whatever way feels right to you. Read it all at once or spread it out over several weeks. Skip pages if you feel like it. Come back to a passage that touched you.

Leave pages blank when the words won't come, or fill them when they pour out of you. There's nothing to accomplish here. There's only you, your story with him, and the space you make for it.

And when you eventually set this book aside, not every sentence has to stay with you. But maybe the feeling will remain that someone understood what it truly feels like. That your grief is allowed to have a place. And that you're allowed to keep breathing, not because the pain is fading, but because the love behind it carries you. Quietly. Steadily. Forever.

A father never simply leaves. He leaves his mark on the way you see the world, the way you make decisions, the way you pick yourself up when something inside you falls apart. His absence isn't just emptiness. It's filled with everything he gave you, and with everything that now remains unsaid. You carry him with you, whether you realize it or not. In your bearing, in your sense of humor, in your values. In the moments when you're strong and don't know where that strength comes from.

This path isn't easy. But you're not walking it alone. Not because this book keeps you company, but because he lives on inside you. In every step you take. Even the uncertain ones.



„No one can tell by looking at you. You put on your suit, do your job, and keep everything together. But ever since he left, the foundation beneath everything you do is gone.

A father isn't just a person. He's the standard by which you've measured yourself, the compass you've followed, and the quiet promise that someone has your back.

Now you stand there, upright on the outside, searching on the inside for the support that only he could give you"

Chapter 1

The Silence After Your Last Breath

There are things no one prepares you for. Not the conversations with doctors, not the family's subtle hints, not even your own gut feeling, which knew weeks in advance that something was coming to an end. You can sense it, you can fear it, you can brace yourself for it, but when your father truly leaves, something inside you shatters that you never even realized was fragile.

It's not like a blow. It's like an earthquake that begins deep beneath the surface and slowly eats its way through everything you thought was stable. He was the ground beneath your feet. Not always visible, not always loud, but always there. And suddenly, you're carrying yourself without knowing how.

Maybe you were with him when it happened. Maybe you held his hand, the hand that once guided you, that explained things to you, that held on to you when you were little and the world was rushing by too fast. Maybe you heard his last breath, that unimaginable sound of silence that comes afterward. Or maybe you weren't there. Maybe the phone rang. Maybe there was a knock at the door, and the words someone spoke made no sense to you, even though you understood every single one.

No matter how the goodbye happened, it pulled you into a world that looks the same as before but feels completely different. The colors have faded. Everything sounds muffled, as if you had cotton in your ears. People talk to you, and you nod, but their voices seem to come from far away. You sit in a room full of loved ones and feel more alone than you've ever felt in your life.

The world outside doesn't care about your pain. The traffic lights keep changing, the news is on, the neighbors take out their trash cans. For them, it's just another Tuesday. For you, it's the day the universe lost its order. And you're standing right in the middle of it, unable to understand how the Earth can keep turning when the person who was your constant is no longer here.

Maybe in the days that follow, you'll want to hold on to everything that's left of him. His jacket, which still smells like him. His handwriting on a note he wrote years ago. The way he said your name, that one particular tone of voice that only he had. You cling to these details because you can feel time trying to take them away from you. Everything is still fresh. You can still hear his voice in your head. But even now, there's this quiet fear that someday even that might fade.



In the first few days after his death, you'll just go through the motions. You'll have to take care of things that feel cruelly bureaucratic while inside you're screaming. You'll make phone calls where you repeat the same words over and over until they no longer feel real. You'll receive condolences from people who mean well, and you'll wonder why their hugs can't reach the coldness inside you. You'll be the son who has everything under control, or the daughter who takes care of everything. But behind that facade, maybe there's once again the child who simply wants his dad back.

You'll feel many things during this time. Maybe a rage that frightens even you, a rage directed at fate, at the unfairness of it all, maybe even at him for leaving. Maybe a sense of guilt that weighs on your chest like lead because you believe you left something undone.

Or maybe a numbness that frightens you because you think you should feel more. Because you think grief has to be loud to be real. But sometimes it's so overwhelming that your body simply shuts down. That, too, is grief. Even the silence inside you is a cry.

And then there are those moments in the morning. You wake up, and for a split second, everything is just as it always was. Your brain hasn't caught up with the news yet. And then, like a stone falling into cold water, the memory hits you: He's no longer here. Every morning, all over again. Like a farewell that repeats itself every day.

The loss of your father isn't just the loss of a person. It's the loss of the world as you knew it. The person who came before you, who held the door open between you and what was waiting for you out there, is gone. And now you're standing in that doorway, alone, and you have to figure out how to walk through it.

Maybe you can't see it yet today. Maybe not tomorrow, either. But eventually you'll realize that you've found your way through. Not because the pain has stopped, but because you've learned to walk with it. But for now, you can just stand still. Give yourself permission to grieve, to be angry, to stare into space. Just be there, with everything that's raging or silent inside you right now.

And if you'd like, keep reading whenever you're ready. Not now, not right away. Only when you're ready. The next pages aren't going anywhere. Just like his love.



Exercise 1

The Last Moment with Him

Close your eyes for a moment and take a few deep breaths in and out. Leave the hustle and bustle of the day behind and allow yourself to settle into stillness. Try to remember the last moment you consciously shared with your dad. It doesn't have to be the moment of his death. Maybe it was one last visit, a phone call, an evening together, or a quiet moment by his bedside.

Maybe it was something small, the way he looked at you, a handshake, a sentence that sounded casual at the time but now carries the weight of the world. Let that image slowly come into focus. It's the moment when he was still there and you didn't yet know what it would feel like to be without him.

When you're ready, write freely and without pressure about this moment. Take as much time as you need. You don't have to live up to anyone's expectations. You only have to be true to yourself and to your memory of him.

Guiding Questions (Optional):

- Where were you? What was around you?
- Was anything said, or was there an understanding without words?
- What did the child inside you feel in that moment?
- Is there anything you'd like to quietly add to that moment today?

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

When did it truly dawn on you that Dad wasn't coming back?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.