

A Daughter's Journey of Faith and Restoration



Daddy

Do You Love Me?

Ariel Allison

Shelby Rawson

First printing: July 2006

Copyright © 2006 by Ariel Allison and Shelby Rawson. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission of the publisher except in the case of brief quotations in articles and reviews. For information write: New Leaf Press, Inc., P.O. Box 726, Green Forest, AR 72638.

ISBN-13: 978-0-89221-658-1

ISBN-10: 0-89221-658-1

Library of Congress Number: 2006928495

Cover by Janell Robertson

All Scripture is from the New International Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

Printed in the United States of America

For information regarding author interviews, please contact the publicity department at (870) 438-5288.

Please visit our website for other great titles:

www.newleafpress.net



New Leaf Press

A Division of New Leaf Publishing Group

Contents

Foreword by Barbara Rainey.....	7
Introduction.....	8
1. Daddy's Little Girl.....	11
2. Damaged Goods.....	23
3. The Dirty Words.....	51
4. Who's Your Daddy?	69
5. Daddy, Do You Love Me?	83
6. It Isn't Easy	111
7. Honor Thy Father.....	131
8. Authentic Restoration.....	155
9. For the Boys	165
10. So What?	199
Counseling Resources.....	214
Recommended Reading.....	214



Journey to the Past

Heart, don't fail me now.

*Courage, don't desert me, don't turn back
now that we're here.*

People always say life is full of choices.

No one ever mentions fear

Or how the world can seem so long

Or how the world can seem so vast.

Courage, see me through.

Heart, I'm trusting you,

on this journey to the past.

*Somewhere down this road, I know
someone's waiting.*

Years of dreams just can't be wrong.

Oh, arms will open wide,

I'll be safe and wanted,

Finally home where I belong.

Well, starting here my life begins.

Starting now I'm learning fast.

Courage, see me through.

Heart, I'm trusting you,

on this journey to the past.

Aaliyah,

Anastasia motion picture soundtrack

Daddy's Little Girl



Chapter 1

There's two things I know for sure.
She was sent here from heaven
And she's daddy's little girl.

— Bob Carlisle
“Butterfly Kisses”

This is my journey, journey through life.
With every twist and turn,
I've laughed and cried as the road unwinds.
This is my journey, and I've learned to fight
To make me strong enough, to lift me up,
To bring my dreams alive.
In my desperation, I swore never again.

— 911
“The Journey”

I walk a lonely road,
The only one that I have ever known.



Don't know where it goes
But it's home to me and I walk alone.

— Green Day

“Boulevard of Broken Dreams”

She wandered through the mall, just killing time. Her mind seemed to be blank, dulled from the TV-like white noise created by busy shoppers. So far she'd spent about an hour searching for the perfect outfit. She knew he loved simple, feminine things, and she wanted to see his face light up when he picked her up for their date. She'd just look in two more stores.

Why are all these clothes designed for a size two with no hips and an impossibly perfect posterior? I'm in decent shape . . . but to wear this stuff I should have started on a “Buns of Steel” routine when puberty hit — and never quit. Back pockets and zippers longer than two inches are my friends! Depressing. Time to move on.

There's a little ice cream shop. I could use a milk shake right about now. Hmm, what flavor? Banana is always a good choice. And it's a fruit!

Sipping on her milk shake, she spotted a little girl and her dad.

They must be having a daddy-daughter day together.

The father wiped his daughter's face as the ice cream dripped down her chin. He kissed her on the forehead, and offered a smile full of delight. Her entire little body seemed to beam as she grinned back at him.

All that just because of a kiss from her daddy.

She realized she was staring at them, unable to take her eyes away from the scene. She sat motionless as memories paralyzed her.

Snap out of it! You don't even know these people.

Too late. The tears ignored her desperate blinking and seemed to take her face hostage.

Not here. Not now. Please God. I'm over this.

But her heart drove her back. . . .

She was five with carefree blue eyes and a dimple made for a Welch's grape juice commercial. She was going to be a ballerina. And a nurse. Oh! And a fireman. She had saved many kittens and knew she was qualified! All of her dolls loved to hear her to sing, and her kitty, Socks, was never stuck in a tree for long.

It was Friday. Dad would be there soon. Her little heart anxiously anticipated his arrival. She couldn't wait to hear the car pull into the



Daddy, Do You Love Me?

driveway, the slam of the car door, and finally the sound of his key in the lock. Nothing could keep her away from the front door. After what seemed like days, she heard it. He was home. She made a beeline for him.

“Hi, Dad!” was greeted by a tired smile and bothered gaze.

She pressed on. *Surely he'll notice my special dress, or how I fixed my own hair. I know I look prettier today than yesterday. I've been good all day. My teacher said I was doing great in school. I cleaned my room. Maybe if I stay really quiet, that will please him. Maybe if . . .*

“Gee, Dad, maybe if I'd never been born, that would have pleased you,” she muttered as the milk shake froze her fingers. And she raced forward 25 years to the present.

Why couldn't he just say it? Or say anything? How hard can it be to tell your five year old that you love her? Or maybe a hug? Stroke my hair. Something. Anything. Anything but nothing. Nothing but questions and unrequited longings.

That was in the past. She was done with it. Life goes on. She was a big girl now. She didn't need a daddy anymore. She was all grown up, and she had a date tonight. When he opened the door, she *would* WOW him.

QUESTIONS OF THE HEART

Won't she? Can she? Can *you*?

Do you WOW him? Who is this guy? Your date? Your boyfriend? Your boss? Your best friend's husband? The guy at the bar? The guy on the bus? Is it your daddy?

Did he tell you he loved you? Were there strings attached? Did he hold you and tell you you're beautiful? Were there expectations that came with that hug? Did he tuck you in at night? Was he even there when you went to sleep? Did you wait for him to pick you up on the weekends? Did he come? Did he tell you he was proud of you? Did he play with you?

Maybe you have forced the questions so far to the back of your mind that the mere mention of them feels like swallowing shards of glass.

You are not alone. Let me say it again. **YOU ARE NOT ALONE.** Women have walked the road you are on. Women have crawled this road you are traveling. Maybe you feel like the road is walking on you and you're tied to feelings you've desperately tried to bury.

You are normal!! Yes, *normal*. The feelings you're experiencing from the past are not some freakish thing. They are the result of a wounded heart — a wounded heart that has never been healed. Stuffing your feelings and

making yourself forget is a natural reaction. It's one of those lovely things called a defense mechanism. You did what you could to protect yourself and your fragile heart. For some of us this started as tiny little girls. Your young mind came up with ways to guard your bruised heart. It kept on making those guards as the years passed, trying so hard to keep it in one piece.

Your story may be different, or it may be very similar to the one you just read, but you and I have something in common. There is a piece of our hearts that is empty. It aches when we see a father walking through the park with his daughter on his shoulders. It shuts down when we hear another woman talk with love and admiration about her father. It bleeds in those moments that we are most honest with ourselves, when we admit that we really do want to be daddy's little girl. Sadly, the truth for far too many of us is that we never were.

I know an abundance of women whose stories are unique, but only in the details. The end result is always the same. They have lost their fathers. They have stories of intense pain, incredible longing, unabashed shame, crippling hurt, but most importantly, they have stories of hope. They know what it feels like to long for a father who isn't there. They know abandonment, abuse, neglect, indifference, ridicule, and unmet expectations. They know the secrets of *your* heart and they know why you have picked up this book. What they say to you today is that you are not alone.

THE LONGING

As much as we hate to admit it, we are in part who we are because of the man that gave us life. With the exception of your husband, if you have one, your father is the single most important man in your life. It can be frightening to know that he held the power to shape you into a confident woman who feels loved and admired, and that he also held the power to crush your spirit and leave you feeling as though you have no value in this life. The worst part is that we had no choice in the matter. We didn't give him that right, he has it based solely on the fact that we share his DNA.

The question for us is, do we even realize that he has shaped our idea of who we are? If so, are we able to accurately pinpoint the affect he has had on our lives?

In Norman Wright's, *Always Daddy's Little Girl*, he states the following:



Daddy, Do You Love Me?

Your father is still influencing your life today — probably more than you realize. For example, your present thoughts and feelings about yourself and your present relationships with other men reflect your father's impact on you. So often, what a father gives to his daughter affects her expectations toward the men in her life. Similarly, what a father withholds from his daughter can also affect her expectations toward other men. . . . If you were to describe your relationship with your father, what would you say? How has your relationship with your father affected your relationship with other men, your career, and your feelings about yourself? ¹

Sometimes, the hardest part is not accepting the truth about our lives, but living with a longing that may never be satisfied. The easier thing to do is stuff the ache somewhere deep down inside where we won't visit it again because, in essence, a longing is something that tugs at our heartstrings and makes us hunger. We ask ourselves, why we would long for that man in the first place? Isn't he the one that did all the damage? Why would I even want him to be part of my life?

But we do. We may not want or need the man that he really was, but we most certainly want and need the man he should have been. Admitting to ourselves that it is a good thing to want love from the man that gave us life is not a weakness, but a strength.

The longing is a good thing. A right thing. A hard thing. A painful thing.

DANCING WITH DADDY

Every little girl was made to dance, to twirl around in circles in front of her daddy and feel like she is the most beautiful girl in the whole, wide world. You read that and your heart went cold. You may want to close the book, or perhaps even throw it at the wall, because that dream didn't happen for you. You were never called princess. Maybe you were never daddy's little girl. I certainly wasn't. I can't even write those words without feeling somewhat of a twinge. I can't imagine what it would have been to feel like a princess, but I want to. I have longed for that my entire life.

The dream of dancing on your daddy's toes still plays in your mind. Only it's never your dad's face and you're never the little girl. You had no dress that he admired. His shoes never bore the weight of your stocking feet. Yet your dream refuses to die. Unwillingly, your heart breaks again

as you beg your mind to put it to rest. You ask yourself why you must keep dreaming of the impossible.

Why am I torturing my wounded heart? Why can't these feelings just disappear?

Because you were meant to dance. You were meant to be lifted across the floor in a powerful caress. A sparkle is made for your eyes as love and adoration meet them. You cannot let go because your heart is stronger than your scars. The cries of your soul are louder than the weeping of your wounds. You are made for *dancing*.

Remember *Father of the Bride*? It's a great movie. Steve Martin plays this perfectly insane and amazingly doting father. He and his daughter had the whole sliding-down-the-banister memory, shooting hoops, and the chats. How can we forget the heartwarming talks they shared? It's just a movie. No biggie. So why was I jealous? It wasn't even real! I mean, come on, whose dad likes them *that* much? My dad certainly didn't. Shooting hoops usually involved at least one scolding when a jammed finger brought a few tears. I felt more like a disappointment than a daughter to be doted on. So why the jealousy? Why the ridiculous tears?

Because that's supposed to be me. I want my dad to get all silly and crazy over me. Me. Me!

Sometimes the longing goes unrecognized for what it is, a restless emptiness. I am surprised when I find myself shedding random tears at a song or when I watch a movie. In those moments, my heart leans forward, desperate to feel beautiful and safe and delighted in.

In Luther Vandross' song, "Dance With My Father," he speaks the longing of my heart, and gives words to an unfulfilled desire:

Back when I was a child
Before life removed all the innocence
My father would lift me high
And dance with my mother and me and then
Spin me around till I fell asleep
Then up the stairs he would carry me
And I knew for sure I was loved.
If I could get another chance
Another walk, another dance with him
I'd play a song that would never, ever end
How I'd love, love, love to dance with my father again.²

How I'd love to dance with my father period. Not again, but just once, even a moment of uninterrupted adoration, just because he loved me, just because I'm special. I don't have any memories like that. So I must find my satisfaction, and admit my longing, in the song that illustrates what I was denied.

SO IT BEGINS

And so the journey begins. We know our current condition, broken and afraid. Our future destination feels vague and unsure, because we don't really know where we are going. We hope. We believe there is something better on the other side, but we don't know for sure. However, today we hover on the edge, waiting to leap, afraid to fall, and wondering if we will be caught. As with any journey, we must take the first step, perhaps into thin air, not knowing where we will land. So we set out on this journey with a confession; it means that we must acknowledge that we are broken. We are damaged goods.

Ariel's Thoughts

I was 25 years old the second time I went to a counselor to talk about my father. I was married, the mother of a little boy with another on the way, and I couldn't escape the whisper in my mind that said I was robbed of something. The scary thing was that I knew the whisper was right.

Jeff came into the office, greeted me, and took his place in a chair beside the desk. He leaned forward and asked the question I had heard him say several times before, "So why are you here today, Ariel?"

I hated that question because I often didn't know the answer. Sometimes I just hurt and didn't know why. That day was different however, I knew exactly why I'd come.

I hung my head and could barely choke out the words. "My father has been dead for three months and I don't miss him." It was the truth, but I felt evil for admitting it. No good daughter would say such a thing.

I *sobbed*, not because the vacuum caused by my father's death was unbearable, but because I didn't feel the ache at all. I tried to tell myself that if I felt anything at all, it was relief. It had been an incredibly difficult relationship. The things he did were inexcusable. That grave held more than a body; it held the crushed dreams of a little girl. He'd taken them with him when he died.

Jeff leaned in, compassion etched on his face and said, “Has anyone ever told you, to your face, out loud, that you had a really *crummy* father? Has anyone ever told you that you should have been able to dance for him and know that he delighted in you? But he didn’t. He *chose* to miss out on you, and the only hope you had of being daddy’s little girl you buried in November.”

I gasped, mouth open, and eyes large, partly because of the guts it took to spell it out in black and white, and partly because it was true. I shook my head.

“See,” he said. “Now I know your secret. I know the one thing you have kept to yourself all these years.”

I had known it all along. It *was* my secret, but my secret was out in the open now and it was agonizing. Someone else knew about the deepest wound of my soul. What I missed was not the physical presence of my father, it was what I had never gotten, what I would never get; the *love* of my father. Until the last breath faded from his body I had hoped that things would change, but that day I found myself sobbing because what I had hoped for my entire life was gone. I would *never* be daddy’s little girl. Never.

Shelby's Thoughts

As I think about this ideal that we women have of being daddy’s little girl, sometimes I don’t know how I’ve felt. I’ve learned so many defense mechanisms to protect myself and avoid my feelings that there have been times when riding a turkey seemed a more likely occurrence. It took me a long time to admit to myself that I wanted and missed my dad’s attention. Instead, I convinced myself that I wasn’t striving to gain his notice, I was merely overachieving because I wanted to do it. Besides, we hardly spoke at all any more. Who could possibly need a relationship with someone who doesn’t seem to want you anywhere near them?

Then I left home for college. Academically and socially, everything was going pretty fantastic. Grades were good, and friends were not in short supply. I had even decided to stay there for the summer to work and hang out.

Meanwhile, my parents were preparing to go to court and deliberate the allocation of my college expenses. (There had been some disagreement as to who was responsible for what portion.) Little did I know, a bombshell was about to explode in my heart. After a phone conversation with my



Daddy, Do You Love Me?

mom, I learned that I was expected to appear in court very soon. Not only did I need to go, but I would have to testify on my own behalf.

The day came. I became the picture of a nervous wreck. Crying was not enough to release the tension, hesitation, and fear that gripped me. (Thankfully, I was able to collect myself before taking the stand.) Mom's lawyer questioned me. No big deal. Then my dad's lawyer began. Forty minutes later I was excused. Even at this moment, a lump makes a bed in the pit of my stomach and my eyes well with tears as I recall those eternal 40 minutes. That man badgered me. Over and over he asked me the same questions about money, money, money. Mom's lawyer objected. Dad's lawyer persisted. I sat there while knots tied themselves through my body, and he did nothing. My dad didn't make a peep while his horrid lawyer beat me over the head with questions. Finally, the judge put an end to it. My seat could not have found my posterior any faster.

Then it was time for Dad to be examined. I think that hurt worse than the badgering. He was being questioned about my grades and activities in school. At that time, I was carrying an A average, had plenty of credit hours under my belt, was working part-time, and was active in many different clubs. (I never carried less than an A- average and always participated in numerous activities.) So when the lawyer said, "Shelby's always been a hard worker, hasn't she?" and my dad's reply came back "No, she hasn't," the crushing of my spirit and wounding of my heart screamed inside me.

That was when I started to realize just how much I was seeking some sort of affirmation from my dad, hoping that he would notice something neat about me. I think I lost hope that day. Hope soon became replaced with questions. The questions became so unbearable that I began wishing for it to end — all of it. After receiving my first letter from him during my second year in college, I became somewhat hysterical. No, not the screaming and ranting kind of hysterical. This was a dreadful, hopeless, sad, and hurt kind of thing. It was after midnight and the tears refused to rest, so I went for a drive. As I drove, I begged God to let another car cross the line and hit me. Or, maybe someone would run a red light or a stop sign. I finally pulled into a church parking lot. Thank God that a friend who cared about me found me that night. For this person, I am eternally grateful.

Yep, I was alive. The questions were, too. I wanted to know why I was never good enough. Why I was never pretty enough. Why I wasn't his

favorite. What was it about me that he thought was so horrible? Daddy's little girl? Yeah, right. I felt more like daddy's little disappointment. Or if you'd prefer, you could have called me father's little failure. I was angry. I was hurt, and I was determined to be done with it. I wasn't going to seek his favor any more. If only life were so simple. . . .

Off in the distance, in the deep caverns of my heart, there was a tiny, tiny voice desperately wanting to be heard. My walls were hiding it. My defenses were choking it. *Shut up! Shut up! You don't know what you're asking. . . . You want the impossible. You still want to be daddy's little girl.*

Endnotes

1. Norman Wright, *Always Daddy's Little Girl: Understanding Your Father's Impact on Who You Are* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1973), p. 10.
2. Luther Vandross and Richard Marx, "Dance With My Father," (J-Records, 2003).

