

Lorenzo Seaborn

A Fatherly Foundation

Stability was a major problem when I was growing up. I had a chaotic personality, and an unstable mood. My interests, dreams, and even morality would shift in a heartbeat. I've always had a vivid imagination, so I was practically living in my own world, doing my own thing. I had no expectations or regulations for myself. In my mind I had little need to focus on academics, least of all English. I could understand my own thoughts perfectly, and I couldn't care less if others understood me or not. There was just one big rule in my life, don't bother Dad. For most of my childhood, my dad was like a volcano. He was a massive immovable obstacle that was just waiting to erupt. It was easy to keep up this rule for some time, but eventually my careless lifestyle began to break the big rule. All of the things I didn't know or didn't care about had made me into an embarrassment. Discipline was coming, and it would hit me like a freight train.

My dad wanted to solve every problem I had and straighten me out step by step. However, he had very little patience when doing so. First, he wanted to fix the fact that I couldn't ride a bike. Second was my lack of interest in sports. Last we went after the real beast, my literacy. I could barely read and my handwriting was comparable to hieroglyphics. He made me sit down and read books for hours while he watched. I didn't care for this much and we eventually gave up on this. Next he made me practice my writing, determined to make it legible. I would stay up all night writing the same letter until he said that I made enough that looked satisfactory. He also wouldn't allow me to sleep or eat dinner, until I had finished my homework. Throughout these lessons we were both frustrated. He would constantly curse and groan under his breath every time I messed up. While I hated the fact I had to go through all of this in the first place. He managed to shape me into a tougher person and keep me mostly grounded to reality.

However, he also managed to make me more stubborn and defiant. It got to a point where I stabbed myself in the hand with a pencil to avoid doing the work assigned to me. Clearly my dad needed a new approach.

He found that the root of my problems lay in my lack of motivation and interest in anything he tried to make me do. He influenced my interest in superheroes and monsters before, and now he used this in his new approach to teaching me. He would always call me downstairs to watch our favorite show Ultraman, and he even started buying me monster toys. Through this, he enacted his plan. He started telling me about comic books, and encouraged me to make my own. Initially, I only engaged with him because he didn't seem to hate me anymore, but I quickly became obsessed with making my own heroes and stories. I read anything that would fuel my imagination, and would spend most of my time writing storyboards and drawing new characters. To my surprise, my dad would actually read them and we began to genuinely bond. He was no longer some disciplinary behemoth, he became my dad. For a time, my growth skyrocketed and I was able to meet his standards. However, the next roadblock hit me harder than anything I have faced before.

When I was in third grade my dad died in a motorcycle accident. When he passed, I lost my drive, my love of superheroes, much of my discipline, and a dad that I had just begun to truly know. I regressed, and ended up in a worse place than where I started. If I was chaotic before, I was unhinged after the funeral. My dad's sense of masculinity was one of the few things that remained instilled in me. Unfortunately, this meant that I didn't know how to properly handle my emotions. To me, crying was weak and I was just supposed to bottle everything inside, ignoring it forever. I would shift moods constantly, going from feeling a depressing emptiness to feeling manic rage. I had become bitter and malicious after what happened. I felt like there was no point

to doing anything, yet feeling like I could do anything because there was nothing left to lose. I practically gave up reading, I only read when I had to and even then my heart wasn't in it. I didn't write any more stories, or come up with any more characters. I had lost my will to live, and the only thing stopping me from breaking down or losing my mind entirely were the remnants of my dad's discipline.

One day I was moping around, when I decided to go through some of my old things. I happened upon some of my old drawings and notes I had on certain characters and story lines. I immediately began to search for my old comics. I managed to find one that wasn't the original but rather, the third reboot of the story. Still it held my attention for hours so I would reread the story and the notes to match it. I ran my finger down the lines of each drawing, trying to feel what I felt when I made it. I remembered my dad's reaction when he read it. Thinking of my dad made me self reflect. I finally realized what a pathetic mess I had become, and what my dad would think if he could have seen me then.

I decided that I would fix myself, get back to working order. I would fulfill my dad's goal for myself even if he wasn't alive to see it. I decided to start up stories again. I would create a bunch of little ones in my head based on how I felt or from something cool I saw. Most of the stories wouldn't actually be written, but I'd still create the story boards and make notes on the characters. I started reading more for pleasure and as fuel for my writing. I had to find inspiration from somewhere, so I pushed myself harder in school to get into honors and AP English classes. I made AP English my priority, because I wanted to improve the writing that my dad worked so hard to teach me. More importantly, I wanted to improve the stories that allowed me to bond with him.

I thought of my dad along this journey. I would use him as motivation. Whenever I felt down, or I started to fail in classes I thought of how he felt when I was learning to ride a bike. I'd imagine his expression or his curses whenever I did something stupid. I thought of what he would think of my stories. Despite making fun of them, he would always take the time to read them, to tell me what was cool and what was just stupid. It was the memory of my dad and my stories that got me out of the hole that I was in. I forced myself to get back up from every failure, just like my sports and bike lessons. I would study my failures meticulously, just like how he studied my handwriting, and think of how to improve in the future. It was these motivations that allowed me to push myself further than I could have imagined and made it into UC Davis. Despite not having a declared major, I know deep down inside I want to do something with my stories, out of respect for myself and my dad that managed to help me find stability from beyond the grave.