

My Companion the Ocean

My dad is like water. Sometimes he's as serene as a coastline at sunrise. Other times, he's as rageful as a dark nighttime sea. Despite admiring the many emotions of the sea, I often stand conflicted at its shorelines, unsure whether I enjoy its warm waters or if I am growing tired of its strain on my body. From time to time, my dad confuses me like this too. He lives a peaceful life and devotes himself enormously to his family. However, his tender heart will sometimes confuse how to express his love and care. Like a rip current, his gloomy feelings pile up like water and break at shore. Standing there, growing angry at his back and forth, I feel too tired to let the rip current pull me in.

My dad, it seems, naturally always found his way to be around the water. His childhood was characterized by overseas visits to the sandy Miami beaches and ultimately, a home in the heart of Florida built on sacrifices and partnered endurance. By virtue of this, I grew up surrounded by the ocean. I remember midnights at Ft. Lauderdale beach with him, rebelliously sitting on the lifeguard stand, pointing at the airplanes landing at the nearby airport. I look back on summer trips to Sanibel island, marveling at the small family-owned stores. I think about the impulsive sunset walks on Hollywood beach my dad insisted we take, always ending photographed on my phone. Perhaps my dad feels comforted by the familiarity the water has to offer.

These pockets of tranquility and happiness frequently compel me to test the waters, dip my toes in and see if the current is rewarding, or maybe just punishable after all. After years of learning the ocean's routine and my dad's habits, I've come to learn he carries a heavy heart. One struck by betrayal and sadness. His deafening strikes often overpower his radiant storytelling, almost always accompanied by his thunderous laughter. I am not particularly fond of the ocean when its unforgiving surging causes destruction. I feel baited by what I thought was a friendly, therapeutic body of water. When my dad hangs his head low, shadowed in overcast, all of a sudden it is difficult to remember the nostalgic stories since it grievously resembles too much of an unsettled sea.

My dad is like water. He confuses me with his high and low tides, making me question my own self-regard and the things I have sacrificed to make sure his tide is at bay. However, the more I hesitate at the edge of the water and look down at it, I do not immediately see its imperfections. I see hugs on the beach, singing in the summer, and smiles at sunset. Sometimes my dad falls into the ocean's blue, but his love is as big as it, and his laugh even deeper than it. So, there I stand at the shoreline, realizing that behind every sunset, sunrise, and midnight plane-gazing is the sun, patiently waiting to rise behind the ocean, each day shining brighter. Maybe I am the sun behind his blue.