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To My Father

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Victoria Reynolds is a senior at Gettysburg College. She is an English Literature major with a concentration in Creative Writing, and is an Italian Studies Minor. She is from Flourtown, Pennsylvania and has a bad habit of collecting delicious teas and never drinking them.

To My Father

Victoria J. Reynolds

I wonder how a man
as kind as you,
as selfless as you,
as willing to give
his entire life
to the essence of his dead wife,
looked into my face,
for twenty-one years
at what reminded him of her
etched in every expression I make.
I wonder how this man
took the beatings of the belt,
gritted his teeth through the application
of a cattle prod to his skin,
electrocution meant for animals
as gentle as he was
with eyes as wide as sunlight refracting.
The blows were dealt him by a father
who also managed to cry
when their favorite dog died.
I think now of how my father took
going to a hockey game
with his dad's mistress
for his fourteenth birthday
in the depths of winter;
how he took finding bruises
on his mother's arms and hands,
how he took all of that,
and still became
my kind and raw and honest father,
yet still a man too shy to tell me
about his adventure in Japan,
who never told me about sex
because he couldn't bear to see

the knowledge in my face,
who cried when my family
thought to give me to an aunt to raise,
who loves me despite my tendency
to fall into wanting to die
every other month,
and who still cries when he thinks too hard
about my mother
fallen in the hallway
the night before the day she died,
too weak to make it to the bath.