

My father's Anger

My father was an angry man. I use past tense - was - neither because he found a cure for his anger, nor because he passed away, but because I cut him out of my life years ago.

My father was an angry man. Although angry isn't the right word. My mother got angry with us if we didn't clean our rooms. She got angry with my father for getting us pets without consulting her first. My father got annoyed with little things. He got frustrated when his plans didn't work out. He was irritated by children's childish behaviour. And all the annoyances and frustrations and irritations built up inside him and they simmered and simmered and simmered until he got ANGRY. Until he was white-hot, hide-in-the-corner, wish-someone-would-stop-him, is-he-my-father-or-a-nightmare ANGRY.

One of my first vivid memories of this ANGER stems from when I was 7 years old. Toy Story 2 was playing in the cinema and my father was excited to take me and my cousin. However, he wasn't good with children being child-like (and two seven-year-old girls are usually very child-like), so we were running late, which annoyed him. Inside the cinema, we split up. My father entrusted us with getting popcorn, while he got the tickets. We were bubbling over with excitement. Not only were we about to be treated to a movie in the cinema, but we were grown up enough to buy the popcorn! We got the big bucket to share. The one that was a third the size of my cousin, who got to carry it because she was the older one. When we reached my Dad, he was already out of the ticket queue. No tickets in hand. We had been late and so there were no more tickets left, all sold-out. At this point my father's frustration was already simmering, but me and my cousin were still cheerful. We still had the bucket of popcorn after all. Until my cousin dropped it in the back of my father's car, my father's sleek, always-clean, not-a-family-car car. And my father got ANGRY. I remember him tossing the half-empty bucket out of the car, it sailing across the street, popcorn like hail in the air. I remember my cousin and I going quiet. Because when someone gets ANGRY, even as a childish child you know not to cry, your survival instincts kicking in and keeping you still and silenced.

I can follow instances like this through my childhood like a bright red line. That time, it was a bucket of popcorn. Another time, my father's ANGER ended with him breaking a TV remote with his bare hands, tossing the pieces against the wall above my and my brother's heads and then throwing our VHS Disney tapes out of his bedroom window, while his girlfriend pleaded with him from the doorway.

Another time it was not a bucket of food, it was not a remote, it was not a VHS tape, it was my little brother. Sent home to my Mom with a bruise and a swollen bump on his forehead.

My father was an ANGRY man. My father was an ABUSIVE man. In the years since I've cut him out of my life, I have come to realize that he had probably never been diagnosed but showed all the signs of IED.

I've come realize that I never want to be like him. I try every day to be a peaceful person. I may have a snarky mouth and a bit of an attitude, but I prefer a harmonious existence.

Yet... sometimes I feel a little dark place in the back of my head, where my frustration gathers, minor annoyances pile up, irritations pool together. And they simmer. And simmer. And simmer. And I wonder how old my father was when he first got ANGRY.