

Mama

After mama died in 1987, our daddy still tried to make summers special by driving us down to the beach house every now and then. We'd all pile into the hatchback with the mosquitos and humidity behind us. It was just the boys now and we took full advantage of that by doing whatever we could to bond.

We all missed mama but we're men and couldn't wallow in that for too long especially around daddy. He was not a very touchy feely kind of guy. Dad was a drink beer, watch cop shows, and go fishing to forget kind of guy. The most emotional I had seen him get at that point was when the Raiders won the Super Bowl in '84.

Though, he did have these nights where he would tell my older brothers to watch over me and stay in the house while he went fishing down by the dock. We all thought it was kind of weird but there wasn't much we could say or do about it. Most nights we stayed inside like he told us to. My brothers would talk about the girls in their classes and what they planned to do on their dates. I would usually read or just go to sleep because there wasn't much to do without company.

One night, I decided to wait until my brothers went to sleep and see what dad was doing at the end of the dock. I pretended to fall asleep on the couch in the den and crept down to the basement when I could hear them snoring. I opened the screen door a bit and the moon lit up the end of the dock just enough for me to see daddy with his fishing rod just sitting there waiting for something to bite. I could see that he only had one fish in his bucket despite having been outside for hours already.

The sky began to fade from a dark distant black to periwinkle and it looked like he was about to get up -- it was nearly dawn. The birds began to chirp and daddy looked up at the sky just as a seagull flew down to stand right next to him. I wanted to open the screen door further to hear what he said but there was no time and he definitely would've heard me. I saw him pet the seagull and feed it the fish from his bucket. I've never seen a bird get so close to a person and be so quiet. He leaned down to the seagull and I could see his lips move but I was too far away to hear any words. From the side, I could see a tear trailing down his face. Though, he looked so happy to see that bird. He looked like he was in love.

Just like that, the bird flew away with the fish and daddy sat back down at the end of the dock.

Mama always loved birds.

