

Bonnie Davis

Both my parents were adopted. My mother at only a few days old and my father as an older child in foster care. They, also, were both born with heart problems. My mother had a small hole in her heart, which she had surgery for when she was just four years old. She went to a green and peaceful camp for children with heart issues in rural Massachusetts. I visited when I was 18, it was beautiful. My father has a small arithmetic issue with his. Beats too fast for his own good.

They met in New York, where they're both from, at a bar in Manhattan on "Miniskirt Monday." (Women wear miniskirts and get free drinks. Where are the deals like this nowadays, I ask?) Bad hearts and bad decisions had led them to each other. My mother has regaled me with the stories of the many shitty ex-boyfriends in her past. Thieves and slackers, all leaving her life without filling neither the real nor metaphorical hole in her heart. At that point, my father had already gone AWOL from the Navy and hitchhiked from Florida to New Jersey to help out his buddy's mother who had been evicted from her home. He sold poetry on the street and used his hands to build beautiful things out of wood. She was working at the fire department in NYC and "going out dancing was my cardio." Her words.

He saw a woman who was smart and witty and uniquely fashionable. She saw a man who was handy and truly kind and not willing to give up. He could fill her heart and she could slow his down. Dance to a gentler melody together.

They bought a house in Brooklyn on Kenmore Terrace. Had two children. A boy and a girl. They both went to school and worked and cared for their kids. Hearts full and life quickly heading towards each continuous moment.

He put aside his carpentry for the growing field of technological development. Perhaps losing the romance in his professional career affected his whole heart. I remember them fighting often. The image is, however, hazy. I had my own interests at the time, such as: finding snails, playing with dolls, and Saturday morning cartoons.

The memory of a little girl is certainly an unreliable narrator but some things, you never forget. I remember my father sitting us down. He told us he was moving to Connecticut and that we would see him on weekends. It's interesting; when your parents split, you can't help but feel "dumped" as well. But it was their hearts at stake. The filling in hers spoiling and his drumming a different song.

Eventually, we all moved to New Jersey. An unhurried New York. My mom, brother, and I moved separately from my dad but we were all in the same state again. Closer than before. He comes for Christmas and weekends and the gap feels smaller and smaller. All our hearts are synched to a familial beat. I realize, the “dumping” we see so often, in TV and movies and romance novels, does not have to be permanent. In life, nothing is so simple.

One of the only simplicities we are all given in birth is our one heart. And only you can decipher its rhythm. Understand the flaws within it that we can and cannot control. Decide who to give pieces to. Who can fill it and who can slow it down.