

M'dor L'dor

– By Shira Symons

‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge’

Ezekiel 18:2

I remember being very close with General Aaron R. Rabow, or to me, Dad. Or at least I was before that summer. He was a well brought up, strong, confident man, full of integrity. He was a perfect leader. He just wasn't the perfect father. I remember all the ruckus that had happened that week. I was young, so I didn't necessarily understand. It started with the increase in stress around the house. I was the only child, so I was alone most of the time. My mother would be out at work most of the days at her underpaid teaching job downtown and my dad will be out at the base or training. I had become a very independent child for my age. By the age of seven, I was packing my own lunches, doing my own laundry, and making my own meals.

I unquestionably remember the day it all began. I was sitting and reading my superman comic as I heard an unbearable ringing at the phone. “DAD THE RINGER” I belted. My voice bounced off the walls of our little quaint home. I got it J-boy echoed back. Jay boy was my dad and my little inside joke. My name is John Bobby Rabow, you can figure out the rest. I heard the panic in my father's voice as he hung up the phone. I had never heard such from him. He was a very calm man under pressure, so I knew something was wrong. It was around 10 o'clock at night, so I was awfully tired. I wanted to go down and see what the commotion was, but my eyelids were heavier than my curiosity.

The next morning, I woke up to the wailing of my mother. “Mom! Mom! What happened Mom?” I hollered as I sprinted down the stairs. As I approached her, her wailing grew louder, as she handed me a letter. I quickly unfolded it and read: “Dear sweetheart and J-boy, I got called down to the base for an emergency deportation down to South Korea to help out our buddies, there's a little issue we got to fix down there. I won't be long I promise. Have dinner ready for me when I get back! Love, Daddy”

Being such a pure minded youngling, I had waited for him every night, with a plate ready for him, just in case. Days grew into weeks, and weeks turned into months that I hadn't seen him. It was just as hard on my mom as it was on me. She began wearing less and going out more. Some nights she would wobble home reeking of tears, smoke, and alcohol. I remember once catching the glimpse of another man in our house, but I was young and bewildered, so I stayed aside. This lifestyle went on for about four months before we received a special visitor - one I would never forget. The doorbell rang and, to my surprise, my mom promptly went to the door. I got up from my comic and joined my mother at the door. A very professional, large man greeted us. The words "I'm sorry for your loss; he was one of our best troopers" infiltrated my brain as I fell to the ground. I could feel my heart plunge down into my feet. The agony had taken me over. I was speechless.

Nothing but tears had come from me from the next few days. My mom's whereabouts were unknown for the rest of that week. Never have I felt such loneliness. The next morning, I woke up to another doorbell, no words can explain my abundance of fear at that time. I came down to gladly see my uncle Renny, Dad's brother. I was fairly close to Uncle Renny given the fact he was so much like dad. Even though, my dad was a college grad, military general, work junkie, and Uncle Renny was a mechanic who spent his days at the bar. "Your mom, she's uh, no longer to be found. The detective think it could be suicide or some kind of escape, I'm really sorry J-boy, I know that this is hard." The sound of Uncle Renny's voice hurt me much more than the fact I had lost my own mother. He and Dad had the same voice, that same serious yet loving voice, as he said J-boy. I was broken yet strong. My optimism kept me from caving into the deep hole I guess my mother had crept into." You're going to be staying with me now kid. Welcome to the family!"

Years had gone by; I was 25, still not living on my own. Uncle Renny had arranged a room for in his little two-story home. My room wasn't the biggest, but it was enough. Posters and post-it notes decorated my wall along with the American flag given to me from dad's fellow troops at his funeral. My life wasn't very much. I was nothing but a high school drop-out druggie living with his dead dad's boozehound brother. Every day I would sit down and flip through pages upon pages of my comics. I remember the one night I had come to something that had changed my path for the rest of life; it was the last photograph I had taken with my dad

before he died. That one photograph brought back all the memories of being denied attention from my dad and the waste he had made of my childhood. I was *not going* to let the rest of my life be wasted on drugs and cartoons. The next morning I tossed out any residue of my past life and headed to the recruitment office.

April 12th, 1969. “LISTEN SOLDIERS! THE MORE YOU SWEAT IN TRAINING, THE LESS YOU WILL BLEED IN BATTLE!” was the first thing told to me as I stood tall and straight in a line of other men and women who wanted more from their lives, just like me. I had traveled down to this base in Columbia, South Carolina to start a new life, to refresh from my horrid past. I had been in training for about one year before we got the call down to Southern Vietnam. This was my time to live up to my father and his work. I had walked into battle with my head high and my father’s voice repeating “J-boy” in my head. Of course I was panic-stricken but I had my dad keeping me safe.

Time had gone by. I had a refreshed mind set after heading into that war. I had found a woman and settled down with children. I raised my children as my father had raised me: teaching courage, independence, and confidence. Of course I had made sure to not take my time for granted, unlike my father. I threw every baseball and went to every recital. Years went on, and I had been blessed with grandchildren as well. That’s when I had realized I had done it; I had turned my life around from a druggie orphan to a proud veteran, all due to him.