

DAD

He didn't stand very tall at only
five feet seven inches and his gray hair
made him fade into the background. He would
watch us with his soft, brown eyes lit with love.

When we were young he would let us go as
far as he felt was safe but he jerked hard
on the heart strings when we were marching on
towards trouble. As adults, he waited
for us to ask for his guidance. He did
not interfere in our separate lives,
but it wasn't for lack of interest
or love. He let us go our separate
ways because he loved and trusted us both.

Virginia to Ohio we followed
the path that railroad employment had led
my father where we were living in a
small house with outdoor bathroom facilities
and no fenced in yard. "Baby, I don't want
you slipping off to bother the neighbors.
You stay in the back yard," said my daddy.

He was always working either at the
railroad yard or at home. He had a lot
to do to keep all of us fed and clothed.
The neighbor's yard was luring me to cross
the mind fence my daddy had erected.
I crossed that mind fence and he spotted me.

"Baby, in the house now!" daddy bellowed.
I took off running. I arrived at the
back door at about the same time he did.
I stood on my tiptoes trying to get
the screen door to open. Daddy opened
the door for me with one hand while in the
other hand was a piece of kindling wood.

“See this,” he said as he shook the piece of kindling. “I’m going to use it on you if you slip off again.” I sat on the gray couch that I hate to this day and didn’t move for what seemed to be hours. My daddy spoke, I listened really hard after that.

“Daddy?” I asked softly so I wouldn’t incur his wrath once again. “What baby?” “Can I get off the couch?” I pleaded sadly. “I never told to stay on that gray couch. I told you not to go next door. Go play.” I ran outside. I was released from a prison of my own making. I miss those soft brown eyes that were always lit with love even when he was angry with me.