

I could hear the squeaking of sneakers on the polished wood gym floor as I dribbled the ball.

“Over here!” Jamie shouted, waving her arms above her head. I made sure there was nobody in the way, and passed the ball to her. Jamie dodged her brother Jakie as he ran in front of her, and she caught the ball.

Jamie dribbled, then passed the ball to Ayo. The basketball hit the gym floor, and went straight into her hands. From her hands it went straight through the hoop.

“Yes!” I yelled. I looked over at the stands and saw my dad cheering. That smile on his face made me feel supported, it motivated me to win the game. Tyty and Jakie’s team had beat us the last time, but this time I was sure we had this. We were ahead by two and there was less than a minute remaining on the clock. All of our team’s hard work was finally going to pay off.

The smile on my face instantly disappeared when Tyty got the ball. He was one of the best players on their team, even though he was only eight.

He dribbled the ball to the other side of the court. Ayo followed right behind him trying to get the ball. I looked at the clock. There were only seven seconds left.

Tyty dribbled around Ayo who towered above him, and shot the ball. It bounced off the backboard and went through the hoop -- a three point shot. As I punched the air in anger, the light brown beaded bracelet that my dad had given me slipped off of my wrist and fell onto the gym floor. I quickly gathered the small round beads and the broken string, but one of the beads rolled under the bleachers before I could reach it. I put the beads and string into the pocket of my gray shorts and walked over to Jamie.

The crowd of parents in the bleachers were all on their feet, clapping for Tyty. I remember feeling that huge wave of disappointment like it was just yesterday.

I gave Jamie a high five even though I was still frowning.

“We tried our best,” I said. I was terribly sad because we had practiced so much, all to lose by one point.

When I looked over at the parents, they were still on their feet cheering.

I then found my dad’s face. He was cheering loudest of all. There was a huge smile on his face as he chanted Tyty’s name along with the rest of the parents.

“Tyty, Tyty,” echoed through the gym. Every time I heard his name, my heart sank a little lower.

I could hear my dad’s voice above the other adults! Why hadn’t he cheered like that for my team? That was what filled my mind. I knew that Ayo and Tyty’s dad had left when they were young, and my dad had tried to be there for them, so I tried to calm down.

I tried and tried but I just couldn’t calm myself down. I felt like my dad didn’t even notice that I was there.

I heard my dad’s footsteps as he stepped down from the bleachers and onto the dark yellow gym floor. I saw him start to walk in my direction, so that began to make me feel better.

I remember thinking everything was going to be okay, my dad was going to make me feel better. I was used to my parents being very supportive and of me, and making me feel better when I was sad. It then turned out that the complete opposite of what I thought, would happen.

My dad didn’t even look at me as he walked straight past me and right up to Tyty. I felt as if my heart had dropped from my chest.

“Great job buddy!” my dad exclaimed seeming to forget that I was even there.

I was standing right next to them, and yet it was as if I was invisible.

My dad gave Tyty a high five and continued to praise him as I stood there alone. I walked directly in front of my dad to see if he would notice me, but he did not even look up.

I didn’t understand why my dad couldn’t even acknowledge me. I was his daughter after all. Tyty wasn’t even related to us! I wish my mom would have come to our game instead of him. He was going to far and I could feel the anger burning inside of me. I wasn’t used to my dad acting like this.

My dad had still not stopped chattering about Tyty. It was just one shot, but my dad seemed to be explaining the plot of an action movie.

I took a deep breath and started to walk over to him. I tried to push the lump in my throat down as I made my way up to him.

“Dad, I’m really sad that we didn’t win,” I said, desperately seeking his support

The huge smile stayed on his face. His light brown eyes were full of light.

“Did you see that shot Tyty made?” he said. “It was amazing.”

It was as if he hadn’t even heard what I just said. I could feel the anger bubbling up inside of me. I just wanted to scream at the top of my lungs.

Now, being older and thinking about this, I know I shouldn’t have been so jealous, but I wasn’t used to my parents paying more attention to other children than to me. My dad really did hurt me that day, and I still think about it now. I am more mature now than when I was ten, but if this happened again I still think that I would feel pretty horrible.

I then walked over and stood by the wall, trying hard not to cry. I slammed my fist on the beige wall. I had thought my dad cared about me. I know that he does now, but at that time it sure seemed like he didn’t.

I was trying so hard to hold my tears down. I swallowed. Thoughts of sadness and hatred ran through my mind. This just wasn’t right. Fathers were supposed to care about their own children more than other people’s children.

I looked up to see Jamie’s dad patting her on the back, and that was the breaking point. I felt tears start to stream down my face. I was crying in the corner and my dad didn’t even notice.

Ayo then noticed that I was crying.

“Are you okay?” she asked, leaning down to talk to me as her short brown hair fell over her eyes.

“Yeah,” I said, trying to stop my tears. But I wasn’t okay. I wasn’t okay at all. I was sure that my dad had completely forgotten that I existed.

At that point I just couldn’t hold it in anymore and I could feel sobs rising in my throat. I looked over my shoulder to see my dad standing with Tyty, and more anger joined my sobs.

I kicked the basketball on the floor as hard as I could and charged down the stairs toward the bathroom. I turned to my right and ran into the the girls’ room.

I held a brown paper towel to my face as I sobbed into it.

To this day I still think about every moment of that day. That moment made me stronger and helped me grow up a little bit. It made me more mature than I was before, and it helped me realize that even though I am an only child, my parents won’t always be thinking about me.