

Poem and commentary: “easter”

by Rick Belden

The poem below is from part seven ([“hints of daylight”](#)) of my book [Iron Man Family Outing](#), and is one of the final poems in the book.

easter

*in this dream
I'm looking at an old family photo
 25-year-old black + white
mother father brother + me
 the classic easter pose in the yard
 outside grandpa + grandma's house
my focus is on my dad
he's so young
 younger than I am now
and he looks so scared!*

*I feel compassion + tenderness for this
 frightened young man who took on too much
 a family he was ill-prepared to handle.*

*I know some of his fear
I feel it myself in my own life every day
 the fear of being a bad father
 the fear of being a father too soon
 the fear of losing my life + my dreams to
 the demands of a wife + a child
he has good reason to be afraid
he looks lonely
no one's taught him how to do this
nobody's backing him up.*

*I feel his loneliness + his fear for the first time
 not in my head but in my heart + my gut
I'm surprised to feel such thorough compassion for him
 as he was at that time
I'm so used to hating the man I knew as my father
 angry insensitive frightening hateful cruel
I don't feel comfortable identifying with
 this man I've cast as my personal demon.*

*this dream frightens me because I'm afraid I'm like him
 but it also encourages me
it tells me that
 maybe I'm beginning to see him as a person
 instead of a demon
 maybe I'm beginning to let go of him at last.*

The dream recounted in this poem was a real breakthrough for me in the course of what has proven to be a journey of many years toward greater reconciliation with my experience of my father and a more complete comprehension of who he is (and was) as a human being, with his own fears, failures, dreams, and disappointments.

In the years since this dream came to me, I've gradually worked my way to a deeper, fuller appreciation and understanding of the circumstances of my father's life, which has helped me heal myself in relation to my inner father, the father I internalized as a child and carry with me at all times. But my relationship with my outer father, the man himself, has never improved, and I don't believe it ever will.

This is a paradox I hadn't expected. I would have thought that being able to see my father's life through his eyes, as best I could, would have gone a long way toward improving the relationship between us, but I finally realized that a deeper empathy and understanding for him on my part did not imply the same from him for me. Ultimately, I had to come to terms with the fact that he wasn't going to change, nor was his treatment of me going to change, no matter what I did or how I transformed my view of him and his life. At that point, I knew my outer relationship with him was over. But my work on the inner relationship continues, as I expect it will for the rest of my life.

As I wrote at the conclusion of ["Broken bones and the Father Wound"](#):

His life continues to influence mine, even across the distance of time and space, in ways both obvious and mysterious, as I continue to work toward resolution and completion of my relationship with him, that distant point on the inner horizon of my psyche toward which I am always aiming and always moving, but may never reach.

To watch my video readings of "easter" and other poems, visit my YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/user/rickbeldenpoet>.

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Rick Belden is a respected explorer and chronicler of the psychology and inner lives of men. His book, [Iron Man Family Outing: Poems about Transition into a More Conscious Manhood](#), is widely used in the United States and internationally by therapists, counselors, and men's groups as an aid in the exploration of masculine psychology and men's issues, and as a resource for men who grew up in dysfunctional, abusive,

or neglectful family systems. His second book, [*Scapegoat's Cross: Poems about Finding and Reclaiming the Lost Man Within*](#), is currently awaiting publication. He lives in Austin, Texas.

More information, including excerpts from Rick's books, is available on his [website](#) and [blog](#). You can also find him on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [YouTube](#).