

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Don't Write

by Candida Lloyd

“Fathers never have exactly the daughters they want because they invent a notion of them that the daughters have to conform to.”

— Simone de Beauvoir

Dear Dad

Write to me. Come to me. I need it. It's why I've written.

Write to me. Tell me about something that made you think of me when you were away working. Perhaps in Valencia you saw a besuited man running and carrying a paella, who fell and dropped it spreading prawns and yellow rice all over the pavement? Write and tell me about that. I would read intently, gasp with surprise and then laugh!

Come to me. Because you want to be with the me who swings her arms with joy at wearing a t-shirt on a warm day. We could swing our arms together! But also, to be with the me who sometimes needs to be silent because she doesn't know the words. Then you could listen to my silence.

I need it. To know that we are joined together by a father-daughter force, with shared memories and pet names and photographs of me when I was small and you were a giant and I sat on your shoulders, clutching your beard.

It's why I've written. To tell you we could be like Mr Bennett and Lizzie in *Pride and Prejudice*. You could sit me down in your study and speak kindly and wisely to me and I could bask in the warmth of your devotion. I could be witty and pretty and intelligent or anything you want your daughter to be.

Dear Dad

Don't write. Don't come. I don't need it. It's not why I've written.

For a lifetime I have been the diner in the restaurant who cannot catch the eye of the waiter (my father) who swoops past, always attending to another more important guest. Signalling with my hand and calling out, he knows I am there but does not respond. I have tried to attract his attention but now I have decided to leave the restaurant.

With these words come acceptance and a release from yearning and disappointment. I no longer expect my father to be Mr Bennett to my Lizzie.

I am free to go outside to swing my arms in the sunshine.