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Judith Moore’s Father Fantasies

In *Fat Girl,* author Judith Moore presents what a person goes through when faced with the struggles of a love/hate relationship with food and the lack of unconditional love and support one needs in order to feel secure. Moore shares hurtful experiences from her childhood, calling attention to the invisible wounds caused by cruel words and the teasing she encounters at school and at home. Her mother is abusive, and her father is no longer in her life. As a result, Moore develops a rich fantasy life, and she often focuses her fantasies on fathers, romanticizing the relationships between other daughters and their fathers. Because her father has been absent from her life since she was young, Moore knows very little about him besides what she has been told by her mother. For example, she knows that her father is a heavyset man, and she finds that interesting. Moore is curious to discover what else they may have in common. Moore’s imagination leads her to believe that complete strangers may be her father. She hopes her father may be out looking for her as she is doing for him. Moore believes that he is the missing piece to her confusing puzzle. She even imagines a make-believe husband who has some of the same characteristics as her father. The multiple father fantasies in Moore’s memoir signify her desire to connect with a man who will love her unconditionally. She believes her father is the key to her ability to accept herself, even though her fantasies often contribute to her self-hatred and loneliness.

Judith Moore’s multiple father fantasies signify her yearning for outside validation to help her feel good enough, which is important because she has never had a father figure in her life to show her unconditional love. When Moore and her uncle Carl share root beer floats, she experiences a rare carefree moment that involves both food and a positive male role model. This valuable time spent with her uncle is the closest thing to healthy father/daughter time she has ever experienced. Moore feels as if she can be herself around her uncle, and she wants to experience this with her father. Moore fantasizes about an ideal father because she believes he will provide the affection her mother fails to provide by giving her the love she needs to feel like a valuable human being. While in the presence of her uncle, Moore does not have to worry about a diet or her uncle judging her. The acceptance from him is what helps her feel welcome and validated. Judith’s uncle Carl makes her feel as if she is one of his own children. Although she lives under the same roof as her mother and grandmother, she still feels the tension and misses the loving bond she needs in order to feel like she is wanted. Moore wants to be a part of a family, and she yearns for outside validation from a father figure to help her feel secure in her own body.

Moore yearns for her father’s love, but she has also convinced herself that her father is better off without her presence in his life. She seems to think that feeling lonely without him is better than the possibility that he will reject her again if he comes back into her life. For example, Moore imagines herself as one of the girls on her father’s shoulders at a fair. Instead of simply acknowledging the father/daughter bond the young girls are experiencing, she imagines that her father would be crushed underneath her if he were to pick her up. Moore’s intention is to convince herself that even if her father was present in her life and able to do fatherly things with her, the relationship would be disastrous. Moore seems to be afraid of rejection, and one side of her wants her father to be there, while the other side is convinced she will interfere with his happiness. Moore demonstrates a love/hate relationship towards her father. She blames herself for her father’s absence. She wants her father to come and rescue her from her mother and grandmother, but doesn’t have any reason to believe that he is out there looking for her. Because she is internalizing her mother’s view of her own worth, Moore attempts to convince herself that his absence is good for him.

Overall, Moore wants someone with whom she can relate. This suggests that Judith has an emotional void that she believes her father can fill. Moore feels that she and her father have characteristics in common, and that he can help her with her emotional and physical struggles. She projects this need for shared experience and acceptance onto her potential romantic partners. For example, Moore mentions characteristics of an ideal, overweight husband she would love to marry. This imaginary spouse has some of the same characteristics she attributes to her father in previous chapters of the memoir. Moore believes she would have more in common with a larger man than with her two previous husbands. In Moore’s fantasy, a large man will help her heal from her father’s absence. She mentions that her ideal husband would be able to go on diets with her. She wants a healthy marital relationship with someone who can help her feel good about herself and her body. Also, Moore implies that a heavier husband will enable her to feel less worried about how she looks on the outside. She wants a relationship in which she is able to sit and talk about food without feeling ashamed or embarrassed. She is hoping to find a husband who can appreciate her and help her change her ways. Moore wants a man who is not embarrassed to show his fat and who is not disgusted by the sight of hers. Also, marrying an overweight man will help her learn to love herself with the encouragement of her husband, which is the same encouragement she longs for from her father.

Moore’s father fantasies imply that even though she has no reason to believe her father will come and rescue her, she continues to hope that one day he will. Judith’s father’s absence from her life has influenced her life tremendously. Her father not being present has put a strain on her self-esteem and her ability to accept her physical appearance. Even though her mother and grandmother are present in her life, she feels as if she is still missing something that can only be given by her father. Even though her fantasies fail to materialize, she comes to realize what she has to do in order to be happy. Although her father eventually reenters her life, and even though Moore suggests that he waited too long to show her he cares, she learns, after all, to love herself.

KEY:

IDEA

ILLUSTRATION

INTERPRETATION