

THE STORIES

1. His Safety Net

A bottom, clothed in a slightly damp diaper, was headed for my face. This chubby little toddler was intently “reading” The Fuzzy Duckling. He just stepped backwards and plopped in my lap, without ever looking back! For that brief moment, I thought I had parenting down.

By Tracy, age 55

2. The Light

We'll leave the porch light burning for a year, honey.

By Barbara, age 79

3. The Pink Tutu

It was the summer of the lawn party. Birthday parties, and everybody was young. Late afternoon and we gathered with sweat-beaded glasses of lemonade. Our children tumbled by and we watched for signs of fatigue or trouble, but instead we were greeted by fireflies, early summer shadows, someone on the back porch with a guitar.

We gathered our children when it was time to leave. Our daughter, this was the year of the pink tutu. She wore it everywhere, over her clothes. On this day, over denim overalls, a diaper, and nothing else.

One summer turns into twenty and our children duck into used cars. We wave to them from our own lawns now. Be careful, don't speed, call when you get there—and they leave.

You get older. You forget so many things. Your glasses, your comb, and enormous scenes from your life. But some pictures remain. Some pictures cozy up inside you and never leave. On summer mornings, half awake, this is where you live: lightning bug tracers, clinking ice cubes, and a blue-eyed girl in a pink tutu, waving to you across the lawn.

By Jeff, age 58

4. Famoly

Famoly is nise, oh famoly is great. They will never hit you with a crate.

By Mason, age 7

5. Skating in the Snow

We were harried at the train station, running late, suitcase leaking, but we got you boarded, settled, and off to college. From the platform, we waved you off into your new life and wondered what to do with our own.

On the train, nearing Baltimore, you opened a discarded magazine and read advertisements for snowboards, skis, flannels and ice skates. Last winter, two weeks after Christmas, you skated on a pond near your home. You skated with your brother, and your parents tagged along on skates purchased that day from Goodwill. Cars and Coleman lanterns circled the pond. Headlights beamed

on high. It was pretty, a few rogue snowflakes, the lights, and the blue, packed ice. We rested at some point with laced hot chocolate, and you skated alone and fast.

Driving home, we tried for light banter. Your absence felt immense, but still, we were so proud. We passed the Dairy Queen and the Wilco gas station, all lit up in the evening. Nearing home, we passed the pond, empty now, flowing.

I said, Do you remember? Of course, you said. I do.

By J.P., age 18

6. The Wedding Proposal

I'm better because of you. I laugh more. It's the silly stuff you do, like becoming a human escalator, and disappearing behind the couch...peeking your head through the doorway and then having a hand appear from nowhere to pull you away by the neck. I'm not forgotten. Every birthday I'll get a hand drawn card with a somewhat cliché drawing and classic block lettering. I trust you. It's not in you to cheat. I'm never bored. You're like the old encyclopedias, full of facts that, thankfully, only reveal themselves when someone has an interest in turning the page. I'll never be stagnant. You're up for new experiences. I judge less. You always consider another's perspective. Will you marry me?

By Anonymous

7. Nothing Beats Nature

Do you remember that horrendous storm, when the lights went out and we hid in the closet? Do you remember the next morning when that rainbow spilt over Glacier Park? You said nothing beats nature.

By Peggy, age 35

8. The Familiar

It's the lemons that I remember. Not the weekly trek to the market, the skillful selection of the sweetest melons and heartiest vegetables, not the familiar banter with the farmers, not the rows of flowers in 5 gallon buckets, not the smell of coffee in your travel cup, but the lemons that you placed with such care on our farm table.

By Alice, age 27

9. The Butterfly

A turquoise butterfly landed on my father's nose. I must have been 7-years-old, max... I remember thinking it was the funniest thing ever and then the sun hit the butterfly and half of it turned to gold. It was magical.

By Elijah, age 42