

Dear Baby Daddy

I'm not mad at you
I used to be, but not anymore
No, I feel sorry for you

Yeah, you were there for the grand occasions
Graduations, a birthday here and there
Perhaps when marriage is in the air
You'll be smiling in pictures
Memories with you that return only if we come across an image
The image of a father and daughter smiling awkwardly
But, the things you missed were far more memorable

The things you missed will make you beg to catch up
You'll plea for her presence at a time when she'll no longer need a daddy
To fight for her, to advocate on her behalf
To teach her how to ride a bicycle, drive a car
To console her when a boy breaks her heart
To train her to fight the world when it tells her she's not enough
There'll be no way for her to catch you up

She won't remember to tell you about her first trip to Washington D.C. when she ironed for the first time
Got a kick out of it, too
It would take too much time to fill you in on her teachers and their quirks
Buried deep will be the story of the boy who ate his eczema during class
Man, she almost threw up until her seat was changed
The things you missed are in a time capsule
Buried so deep that you'd have had to be there to find the spot

You missed the best parts
The renditions of Frank Sinatra coming from her mouth as she types a paper
The way she looks away and blushes and then smiles when she's wrong
The way she sleeps with her cat on her face
How she cries at getting one question wrong on a test
Her compassion in action
You've never seen her smile to the point of glowing
You don't know how terrified she is of spiders that we don't even joke about it
You'll never know how silly she gets
You'll never be able to surprise her with the perfect gift at the right time
No, all those treasures are mine
More treasures than King Solomon
Buried in my heart

I feel sorry for you
A man who allows his child to forget him
A man who absconds his responsibility under the guise of trusting me
To be a strong Black woman
You forced me to confront my own weaknesses, learn the necessary lessons
Just to make her stronger than I'll ever be
Wiser than I've ever been

By Dayniah Manderson