

The Boss

My dad was a real son of a bitch growing up. He'd dominate a room with his furrowed eyebrows, and his patriarchal swag. This man would look around as if he was sizing up everyone even though he was only five foot and maybe five inches. He would always tell me he was five foot seven, but I know for damn sure he would only say that so he would sound taller than my mom. My mom was never allowed to wear heels, even though I know she loved them. Anytime her and I would go shopping, you'd see her eyes stick to the windows of Macy's or Nordstrom's, looking down at the mannequin's stiff feet. Honestly, I think God made my dad a small man on purpose because he knew that if he made him any taller, my dad would probably rule this world. His personality is enough to handle as it is. He's the type of man that could just look at you and somehow make you believe that you did something wrong.

I remember being a little girl and my dad playing James Brown from his jukebox, which he would constantly shine up. There was not one finger smudge on that glass. Nobody was allowed to touch it, except me. He wouldn't even let my mom touch it. How fitting, as he would lip sync to "It's a Man's, Man's World" by James Brown and then grab my mom real tight as he seductively whispered into her ear that "it wouldn't be nothing without a woman or a girl." Sometimes he would turn the music up so loud on the machine and he would do his funky dance, as I would call it. He would shake his hips and shuffle his feet really quickly, spinning and shouting,

"Look at me you know what you see, you see a bad mutha. Told you so!"

I think "The Boss" was his favorite song, more like it spoke to him, down to his soul like a moving piece of poetry would. It was the epitome of his being, so much so that I'm sure the

bass in the background echoed in his footsteps and permeated in all his actions. He was a bad mutha alright! I think my mom would agree as she would put me to bed and wait until 6 in the morning for my dad to come home. She would wash his clothes twice to get the smell of another woman's perfume out of them. Now in the wake of her eighties, she'll do the same, except the smell of perfume has been exchanged for the stench of urine and drool.

“Where's my wife,” my dad said with a breath of fear in his voice.

“She's in the bath dad, getting ready for the day.”

My parents live with me now and my dad can't go five minutes without my mom, even if they are under the same roof. I joke to my mom that he's basically attached to her hip, and as quiet and obedient as my mom is, she would give a snarky remark only for my ears to hear.

“I guess I got what I have always prayed for, my man to always be by my side.”

A mouth full of oversized dentures, and scraggly gray eyebrows replaced the bad mutha I used to know. At this point I think that bad mutha has deteriorated away with his mind.

The other day my daughter, Rose, was helping me pack away my parents' belongings at their house. My dad came along because the doctor said that it would be good for him to look at some of his old things, maybe to activate parts of his memory he hasn't recalled in a while. Rose found his old jukebox tucked away in the garage and turned it on. Muffled by the dust in the speaker, the vague sound of,

“Paid the cost to be a boss” cut through the air.

I was watching out of the corner of my eye as I was packing some rusty tools. My dad looked at my daughter and grabbed her hand.

“Ann, let’s do the funky dance”

I respond to my name and make eye contact with Rose, who is confused and devastated that her grandfather forgot who she was.