

Her Father and the Feather

I couldn't help but feel I was standing in his place. It was 11am and my friend Sarah and I were waiting for the wedding car to pick us up and take us to the church.

The clock in the hallway chimed as she stood, beautiful in her white dress, looking like a lost little girl without her Dad, Christopher, who had passed away the year before. Sarah had been a Daddy's girl up until the day he died and today was always going to be hard. I was honoured that she had asked me to stay with her through this time and ride in the car with her on the way to the church.

As we stood contemplating what a big moment this was, I found myself lost for words. How do you comfort someone who is such a mixture of emotions? Sarah was about to marry a wonderful man, but was missing the original man in her life. When the time was right, I simply asked her if she wanted to talk about anything or not. She took some time to reflect on how much she missed him, today of all days, and then we spoke with me about many funny memories she and I share about him.

She had told me after he died that there was an old wives' tale suggesting that every time you see a feather on the ground in front of you, it's a well-wishing from a loved one who has passed away. This was a great comfort to her whenever she saw one and sure enough, between the front door and the car laid a feather. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw it lying there. She turned and smiled at me; he was by her side.

Sarah walked herself up the aisle to meet her new husband, with me a few paces behind. She stood proud and strong, the daughter he had brought up so well. When the time came for the speeches, her Uncle spoke on her Dad's behalf. There wasn't a dry eye in the house as his kind words flowed. His speech was a mixture of the traditional 'growing up' stories and a humbling, heartfelt account from him on the sadness of having to fill his brother's very large shoes at that moment.

When the dancing had started, Sarah requested that the DJ play a song which was one of her Dad's favourites. She asked everyone to dance in a circle and grabbed my hand, leading me to join her in the middle. We danced like fools to his favourite song, with tears running down our faces. I felt such a mixture of emotions at that moment: sadness that Christopher was not there dancing with Sarah, joy at the funny memories the song evoked in us, and an overwhelming sense of pride in my friend.

How did this event change my life? It made me realise how lucky I am to have never suffered a loss such as this. I am honoured to have known Christopher when he was alive and seeing the strength of Sarah on her wedding day made me love and respect her even more. She has not had an easy life and yet she is one of the strongest women I know. She truly is an inspiration and now it's her that I'm privileged to know.