My Father Taught Me the Truth About Super Heroes and Fairy Tales

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I remember when my mother left California and my drug addict biological father when I was four years old. She moved back to Memphis, filed for divorce, and later met the man that would become my father. Unlike the fairy tale ending that she thought she would have with my biological father; this new relationship would develop into a strong and happy thirty-year marriage, my mother found her Permanent Prince Charming, and he would legally become my father.

When I was in the first grade, my father would take me to school almost every morning. We would get caught at a light and he would make a bet with me that he could make the light change green. As if he had some magical super power he would yell, “Green!” and the light would change almost instantly. At the time, I was too young to know he was looking at the light at the opposing intersection and knew that once it turned red our light would turn green.

As I got older and understood how the lights at the intersection worked, I still believed my father was our family’s superhero. My father balanced the role of a husband, father, employee, cub scout leader, and so many other things that he had to have some supernatural abilities. As I watched my parents throughout the years, my dad was a great example of how a man should treat a woman, his family, and God. As I got older, he never failed to save the day whenever I needed him.

His unfailing love would set the standard for how I viewed other men. I grew up in the South and my parents made sure I knew my history at a very early age. I was aware of the prejudices and social injustices often inflicted on the George Floyds, Ahmaud Arberys, and Chris Coopers in my community. Black men deserve to be respected and valued because we live in a world that will never understand their significance.

When I started dating, I expected those same great qualities that my father possessed in the men that I dated. This made me vulnerable and too trusting. I was in a three- year tumultuous relationship with a charming drug/gun dealer who had no concept of monogamy, but I remained committed to him because I believed he would provide the happy ending I wanted. I yearned to have the family that my parent’s gave me for myself and my daughter.

A year later, I was convinced I found my Prince Charming in an older gentleman twice my age. He was caring, protective, and charming. We were married. I left my home in Arkansas, and moved to Georgia. Shortly after, I found out on a social media that he was still happily married to his wife of twenty years.

After that, I began to realize that when my mother met my father she wasn’t searching for him, he found her. I spent so much time looking for my Prince Charming and not enough time preparing myself for him. I still had not fully recovered from past trauma I had experienced. I also used my relationships to validate who I was because I didn’t love myself. I spent the next few years focusing less on finding the Prince Charming and becoming more of the Princess that my Prince Charming needed.

My teenage daughter and I moved to a new apartment. The maintenance man and I were neighbors and became good friends. He would leave roses on my back porch and I agreed to go on a date with him. We became inseparable. Now, after kissing a few frogs, I married my Permanent Prince Charming. He is loving, caring, a hard worker, a good father, and he is every bit of the Super Hero my father is.

I can thank my dad for showing me superheroes and Prince Charming aren’t fictional. Now that I have daughters of my own, I can share with them two of the life lessons I learned from my father:

Black men are powerful. They have the power to become superheroes, even if some are Clark Kents who fail to discover their supernatural abilities.

You can have a happy ending, but you don’t have to look for your Permanent Prince Charming because just like in the Fairytales …He will find you.