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An Open Letter to John Mayer

Jalyn Gilmore

Dear John Mayer,

When you came up with the song “Daughters,” who were you thinking of?

Who were you trying to love? Was her heart trapped far too deep in the recess of her chest quaking like a small insect caught in a web? John Mayer, who were you trying to love? I can imagine she was a woman just too complicated just too elusive just too much too soon and not enough time. You said yes and she said not quite. You held your heart out and she wasn’t ready to take it. So her father just didn’t treat her right. And maybe he didn’t. Maybe he was a shit show of a dad. Maybe he was a bull in a china shop and shattered every memory into small glistening shards that she just couldn’t put back together. Maybe he packed his things along with her smile and walked out of the door only to return on weekends or never at all.

And this woman is left in his wake using her hair to sop up her own tears and wash her face like Mary Magdalene and she is waiting for the right man to come in and replace him and put her back together again. She asks herself what she did wrong, what she could have done, what she didn’t do. She wants to carve her love into his back and have him cloak her in his arms until the bitter cold locked away in her memories makes her stop trembling.

Or maybe not.

John Mayer, why do you want fathers to be good to us daughters?

Is it to make your job easier after we have been released into the wild like captive animals tossed out of captivity? You don’t want a complicated woman. You don’t want a woman with too much history. You don’t want a cautious woman. You don’t want a broken woman. Nobody does. So preventative measures are needed. Fathers, you call, be good to your daughters. Love them and we’ll only have to fight half the battle. Once you break a woman, it’s just too much trouble to put her back together again.

John Mayer, I would like to tell you this in response: Fuck you.

What is it? Is it too much? Is our love coated in barbed wire soaked in vinegar? Are you worried if we see a father playing with his children, we'll break down in tears and you won't have enough tissue and glue to fix us? Are you scared you'll come home and find pieces of us scattered across the apartment and you won't want to step in it?

I want to let you know, sir, I don't need you to fix me. You see, we broken girls know exactly what we are. We know that boys are scared of girls like us because we are more than what they are willing and accustomed to working with. They fear our tears are hair-trigger grenades nestled in gunpowder ready to ignite at the slightest provocation. We are not the girls you marry. "Son, don't marry a girl with daddy issues." We already know exactly what you're thinking. You want a love that is open and bursts dams releasing the floodgates of affection and patience and understanding.

But our love is not of that brand.

You see, a girl with "daddy issues" has her own type of love. She loves quietly because the last time she loved too loudly, she was silenced before she even knew what she wanted to say. She loves on the edge of her seat because this wouldn't be the first time her love was disappointed. She loves with her heart tucked away for safekeeping because you are asking too much, too quickly. You are reaching for something that is not yours to have only to hold. Her trust is not a rose that blooms bright and fresh during the spring. Her trust is waiting, lying dormant for just the right season.

John Mayer, our fathers may not have been good to us but we are not broken. We have spent every day of our lives collecting our ragged pieces as we go. We "broken" girls keep superglue in our back pockets, staples in our purses and duct tape in our nightstands.

So, John Mayer, don't call on our fathers to love us so it makes your world a little easier. Call on them to love us because we are worth loving. Because we try twice as hard to love everything else. Not because the broken need to be fixed. But because the broken already know the never-ending cost of repairs.