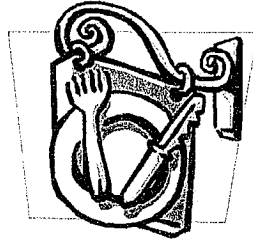


# Long Day at the Café



by Diana Patrick

**S**ara Ferguson stared out the window of the café. She could not stop thinking about her dad. She was living at home with him, attending college full time. Last night her dad was complaining of chest pain. It really scared her. She had never thought about losing him. Sara was four when her mom died. Her dad had always been there for her. Now she could not stop worrying. He was only 49. She needed him.

**S**ara watched people go in and out of the shoe store across the street. It reminded her of when she was a little girl. Sara started working when she 10 yrs old. Every Saturday, she walked to work with her dad. He owned a shoe shop in Los Angeles. Sara liked hanging out with her dad. She also enjoyed helping the customers pick out shoes. Her dad paid \$1.50 for every pair of shoes she sold. The most money she ever made in one day was \$15.00. Sara's dad taught her how to budget her money carefully. Each week, she wrote down how many pairs of shoes she sold. She counted all her money. Then Sara put 75% in a savings account that her dad opened for her. She kept 25% to spend.

**S**ara's dad started talking to her about college when she was 3 years old. "It's never too early to start planning for your education," he always said. And he was right.

**S**ara never touched the money in her savings account. She waited until her graduation day from high school. On that day, she spent some money. She bought her dad a special present for putting up with her teenage years. She bought herself the class ring she wanted. Sara felt like she was rich, but not for long. Her dad agreed to pay for her tuition each semester. Sara, herself, had to pay for her books. T

**S**ara did not think that money for books was a great deal. Then she she went to the bookstore that Fall. She was surprised to find out how much it cost to go to college! But it was all working out fine. Now she was nearing the end of her first year. She was looking forward to finding a summer job.

But Sara's outlook on life changed yesterday. She saw the pain in her father's eyes last night.

He had gripped his chest and fallen back into the chair. She knew things would be different. She skipped school today to sit in her favorite café. She needed to think. Her head was full of questions. *Do I need to start taking care of my dad? Do I need cook healthy meals? Should I start exercising with him? What if this happens again? What if he dies? What will I do?*

**S**ara decided to make a list of important matters to discuss with her father. She already knew what he would say: "Oh, don't be silly. There is nothing wrong with me." And she would give him the speech about not blowing her off. And then he would listen. She would ask questions. He would answer them. And she would wish she were 10 years old again.

**S**ara stayed at the café all day long. She wasn't hungry. She hadn't eaten all day, except for a muffin and coffee that morning. At about 4:30, Sara looked up from her list. Standing outside the café window was her father. He looked down at her. She smiled, and tears streamed down her face. Her dad came inside and sat down. He didn't say anything at first. He just looked at the paper, trying to make out the words between her fingers. He wiped her tears away, and said, "I'm okay, but you're right, we probably need to talk about some things."

**S**ara thought, "I'm so glad I didn't have to give him the speech,

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