

My Father

*There are pictures of when my dad
Was like everyone else's dad,
I can only wish I remembered that man,
I have one here,
Of a young father giving his little girl a piggyback ride,
Do you recall those days?
I can't.
Of my dad, I most remember the red phone,
The one in the little closet he used as an office
Halfway down the upstairs hallway,
Halfway between my bedroom and theirs,
I can walk that whole place in my head.
The red couch under my window,
Bambi on the sheets,
The big, circular carpet under their bed,
The living room, dining room and kitchen,
There's mom—going from place to place.
Can dad play?
He's working, dear. Leave your father alone.
There was always that red phone.
Then there was the house, you know,
And dad built himself an office into the basement.
From the circular carpet to fully finished in blue,
There was dad's haven.
There he stayed. As if in hiding,
Always working. No time for me.
But I got to go to private school,
Yet finally I do remember him—
His wrath at least was always clear,
I recall the terror I learned more than the pain,
Somehow, though, I was always*



Daddy's little girl,
Daddy's girl who needed him
When times with mom outweighed my trouble with him,
As I was lost to my "terrible teens,"
I went looking for you,
You were all I had,
All I remember now is the waiting,
All unheard,
Less important than your business
Though I needed only a moment of your patience,
Words spoken and nothing done,
Was it ever any other way?
Then there was disaster,
Suddenly, I was no longer your sometime joy,
Only a disappointment,
I will never live it down,
That at least is clear to me,
You used to say—and I was a fool to believe—
We should get the best of everything,
The best you could give,
Now, I'm only a leech to you,
A nuisance you should have been done with long ago,
How can I answer when asked of my love?
When I've already been tossed aside
In favour of . . . golf?
Goodbye, my father,
Now I take my leave of you,
I can never ask for forgiveness,
I have too much pride,
And for what?
Perhaps time and distance will heal our wounds,
We are too much alike,
But someday, before it's too late,



Let me meet my dad in the photograph.

