

Fetch

Part 1

My mouth fell open as my ball rolled off its pedestal on my desk and out of the open window behind it. I stood there, angry at myself for being so careless. The baseball that my dad and I would throw around before he passed had always sat on display on my desk; it had for years. I was always careful with it, making sure nothing ever happened to it. But our air conditioning unit broke today, so I had to open the only window in my room, which is inconveniently, right behind my desk. I told myself that it was fine; I would just be careful. Well, I didn't account for my clumsiness, causing me to trip on the desk chair's leg and then fall into the desk itself. When I scrambled to my feet, that's when I saw the ball teeter on the stand and eventually roll right out of the window. I couldn't believe that had just happened. I grabbed my sneakers, pulled them on, and raced downstairs to see if the ball was still intact.

If this was any other baseball, I wouldn't be worried about it surviving a fall from my second-story window. This wasn't any other ball, though; it was the same ball my dad and I had used every time we played catch. And we played catch a lot. That ball had been through countless mud puddles and rainstorms for 14 years; it had seen better days. A decade later, it's as fragile as you would imagine, which is why it sits on what I thought was a safe stand for it. I opened the back door and hurried over to my window, hoping the ball hadn't split apart at the seams. I came to a stop where the ball should have been, but nothing was there. I glanced around wildly, looking in the yard to see if it might have rolled further back, looking in the bushes at the base of the house,

looking everywhere. However, I had no luck finding the ball. My eyes welled up with tears at the realization that I had just lost the one thing left that I had of my dad. I walked back towards the door when I heard barking coming from the front of the house. Curious as to what was happening, since none of our neighbors had a dog, I walked around to the front of the house.

When I pulled my hand away from wiping the tears from my eyes, I stopped dead in my tracks. The dog had my ball. I looked at the weathered ball sitting at the dog's muddy paws, and my heart soared. I hadn't lost the ball after all! I stepped towards the dog, hand reaching for my ball. He apparently did not like this because he grabbed the fragile ball in his slobbery mouth and took off running. I cursed under my breath and took off after him.

I was bent over, hands on my knees, trying to catch my breath, when I heard the dog bark again. I looked up, and I realized where I had followed the dog. I was dumbfounded as I stared at the cemetery where we buried my dad. The dog barked again, and my gaze went from the sign above the cemetery gates to that mangy mutt that stole my ball. I took a deep breath, stood up straight, and started to walk toward the dog. He wagged his tail, picked up my ball again, and trotted off. I groaned as I picked up the pace.

I saw the dog sit down, drop the ball, and look at me. He seemed to be waiting for me to catch up. When I finally reached him, I quickly snatched the ball from between his paws. I turned the ball over in my hands, inspecting it. It looked like it had before it fell out the window, thankfully. I shot the dog an annoyed glance before I noticed what headstone he was sitting in front of. I stepped closer, trying to get a better look to make

sure I wasn't delirious from a lack of oxygen from the run. The dog ran right to my dad's grave. I looked at the ball, then the dog, and then the headstone. I couldn't believe what just happened. I stared at the headstone, zoned out, until I heard the dog bark again. His tongue lolled out of his mouth, and he wagged his tail as I looked down at him.

Part 2

I was sitting in the backyard, as I often do. I looked up at her window, which was open. It's normally not open. I kept staring at the back of the house, trying to catch a glimpse of her through the window. Suddenly I saw something, but it wasn't her, it was our baseball. I cocked my head as I watched it roll out of the window. That was strange; it was unlike her to let something happen to that ball. She's had it on display on her desk since I left. I watched the old and tattered ball plop on the ground under her window. I rose from my sitting position and trotted over to the ball. I prodded it with my nose, trying to determine if it was safe enough to pick it up. I wanted to get her attention but didn't want to ruin the ball. After concluding it was safe, I picked it up. I headed to the front yard, a plan quickly developing in my mind.

I heard the back door open. I knew she was frantically looking around for the ball. I sat down in the front yard and placed the ball gently in front of me. I called out to her, "I have it! Come here!" I wanted her to come around to the front of the house so she would follow me to where I wanted to take her. Just like I had planned, I saw her come out from the back of the house. She had her hand to her eyes, wiping away her tears, and a sharp pain shot through my chest. I never meant to upset her; I just wanted her to notice me. Then she looked right at me. Her eyes fell to the ball, and her face lit up. She

started coming towards me, her hand outstretched. I carefully picked up our ball again and started running down the road.

I arrived at the location where I wanted to take her, so I sat down, dropped the ball, and waited for her to catch up. Two legs are way less efficient than four. She stopped in front of me and was attempting to catch her breath. I called out to her again, "Look where we are!" I saw her gaze snap up to the sign I was sitting under and then down to me. She took a step towards me, and I was filled with happiness. She was about to realize! I once again grabbed the ball and headed to our final destination.

I looked at the stone marking where I wanted to take her. This was it; this was where she would realize who I was. I took a seat, set the ball down, and looked at her. She stormed up and yanked the ball from in between my feet. She inspected it, probably making sure that I hadn't ruined it. She glared at me until she finally noticed what I was sitting in front of. She came closer, maybe unsure if she was reading the words behind me correctly, my name among those words. She kept looking at our ball, then at me, until she finally began staring at the stone. She was probably trying to make sense of the trip I just took her on. "It's me! It's Dad!" I tried to make her understand. She looked down at me, and I smiled, my tongue accidentally slipping out of my mouth. After all, it was a lot longer than I was used to.