

## Dear Daughters

I don't really know how to start, I feel sick with emotions, but I need to do it because I owe you the truth. And I owe the truth to myself.

To begin this letter, I want to say that I love you and that you are the greatest miracle of my messed up life. There is no way I could go back in time, this cannot be done, but it might be a good thing as everything happens for a reason in this world.

I remember when you were born; I remember how you learnt to walk and how happy that made me feel. After that, I remember less and less. As the time passed, something else was becoming more important.

I wasn't aware that the truly important things would be happening next to me, but without me. I took the presence of you and your Mum for granted, you were around just because one should have a family, just because having a family is a social norm, but what really mattered to me was myself with my booze-enslaved soul. I don't remember your first day at school, and I don't remember many other things that I should. I thought I was a great dad and a great husband. A self-important idiot.

We owned a flat; back in the day in Poland owning one was a mark of success. I had a good job and a decent salary, what more can a man want? But my life and things that really matter in life were passing me by and I wasn't even aware of it.

A time came when you and Mum seemed obsolete to be. I lived to party, hang out with my mates, flirt with girls and play risky games. A macho-dad. I am the breadwinner, therefore I am entitled to whatever the hell I want, and everyone keeps their mouth shut.

You must have been aware of everything; I wrapped myself in an invisibility cloak. You must remember my first rehab, no big deal, a macho-dad happens to be unwell but soon will be treated and miraculously recovered. I was getting better, I prescribed myself my own medicine... I decided to change everything around me. Do you remember that? We bought a house in the countryside and moved down. I even got myself another job, naively hoping I would run away from myself. All in vain, I lasted two years.

Now I know any changes in life need to start from within, not by altering the outside world. Changing your address is nothing more than an aimless struggle. Do you remember, it was the beginning of the end? Do you remember when I told you to lie to Mum, so she didn't know I was drinking again? Do you remember we had no money to heat the house and the water got cut off? When I was unable to lift a finger? Do you remember when I left you alone and our neighbour looked after you before the family took over? Mum was abroad and I was drinking with another woman, fifty miles away from home.

Do you remember visiting me in a psychiatric hospital, and I dwelt in the world of my own imagination. Or when we had a role reversal, and you, two girls in their teens, looked after me... it should have been the other way round.

There were a lot of issues, I know. On top of that, you two leaving, moving away, moving abroad to join your Mum, and me facing the dilemma – should I let you go? I did. I put my own issues and ambitions to the side, which ended in me spending three months in the psychiatric hospital.

Do you remember searching for me for months and not hearing from me at all? Ringing local hospitals, shelters, mortuaries, trawling through local newspapers' obituary columns?

You didn't deserve to go through all this. I wasn't there for you when you needed me most, when you went on your first dates, when you made life-changing decisions, when you had problems, even when you argued with Mum.

I know you love me and you forgave me. This is priceless. I forgave myself, otherwise I wouldn't be able to live anymore. You know, I've turned my life round. I was fortunate enough to have God leading me away from the abyss I was heading towards, a blind, poor drunkard. I needed to turn to God, because he was always ready to accept me back, I just needed to make the first step. Even when I was stealing, hurting others, manipulating people; lived with no moral values, no rules and no role models, God was there for me.

My recovery didn't happen instantly, there was nothing miraculous to it. I needed to work hard for it and pay the price. It is the price I needed to pay to live, love, have values and dignity.

It was well worth paying. I met amazing people that support me in my road to sobriety. They make it easier, without them I wouldn't stand a chance. Life is not a fairytale as they say, but I was given a chance to live mine sober. You can say you have a dad once again. I'm back. I love you.

Dad

*Editor's note: the author of the letter has been living in England for the past few years. He stays in touch with his adult daughters, now settled in Germany. He quit drinking and has friends that support him through tough moments in life.*

Translation: Anna Borowska