

My dad. Where to start? He made me laugh. Like nobody else could. He always did. My earliest memory of anything is falling about in my highchair until my belly ached while he talked with silly voices and pulled faces. He seemed to me to be able to assume any kind of persona. I'd kick my legs with excitement and cry for more.

My mother often intervened, trying to get me fed and ready for bed. She would shake her head and sigh at his mock dread that set me off giggling again. He loved to tease me, pretending not to know who I was, making me shout my name over and over until he 'recalled' the fact he had a daughter.

I thought he should have been an actor. In reality, he was the boss at a big office in the city, a finance company, all money and meetings. He told me it was rather boring, but it paid very well. He was older than mum, and for years they were childless. They found out that an illness he had as a boy meant he could never have kids so it was quite a surprise when Mum became pregnant. She was already over forty. Dad said I was extra special for being the impossible baby.

Such was his soft spot for me, he relied on mum to dish out the discipline I likely needed. When I fell in the river and came home a mess, she gave me a heavy scolding. Dad bought me a new outfit. I think I had a well-balanced upbringing owing to their differing approaches.

Dad did the standout stuff with me. He took me to the Natural History Museum where I was flabbergasted by the whale. It was him who got me interested in the stars and the mythology associated with them. From that arose my own stories for me to read to him. He'd sit in his beloved armchair, rosy cheeked, and marvel at my romantic inventiveness, his eyes twinkling with admiration for his little Lotte.

His favourite was a good, dark tale of mystery and ghosts, so I wrote plenty of them. Secret worlds in which strange things would appear and disappear. The whole thing with the candle and the spooky old house followed naturally on from this. A real life drama to unleash my imagination. I considered telling him about it, only I knew he'd worry for my safety, talk to mum and I'd end up barred from going near. A shame because he'd have been as intrigued as I was by how deeply the death of his wife had affected Mr. Harrow. He often spoke of the lingering undercurrent of those no longer here influencing the present. It was certainly true of him.