

Dear Nicholas Sparks:

I used to think I was cool because I repelled any and all book suggestions that involved love. But last summer, I changed. I would watch my Mom read the end of *The Last Song*, crying. Obviously, it was weird for me to see, because most people don't watch their mothers cry. I would attempt to tell her to calm down, but she couldn't. I instantly thought, "Could a story be that emotional?" I was curious. After her sobs, she left the house with the book on the side table. I picked it up cautiously, deciding that I should give it a shot. I have three simple words, that back in the day would kill me, but they had turned out changing my life: "I was hooked."

Relationships are more complicated than I thought. Believing in simple, black and white relations, I used to consider that my Dad was the one who did all wrong in my parent's divorce, and I would ignore him in every way I could. I never wanted to go to his house, never wanted to see him, and never wanted to talk to him. As I read about Steve and Ronnie though, I saw the hurt that Steve felt, even though he was silent about it to Ronnie. What if this was happening with my Dad and me? I put myself in Ronnie's perspective, and my Dad in Steve's perspective. I really thought about what he was thinking while I rejected him, the quiet pain inside that wouldn't let go because he loved me so much, and that really hurt me. It never occurred to me that what I was seeing was my Dad emotionally hurt, even when he didn't express it. Seeing relationships in black and white can change what is actually happening, whether it hurts someone or changes your interactions with them, and your book taught me the complexity of relations.

After reading about the unexpected incident for Ronnie, but expected tragedy for Steve, I changed the way I thought of my Dad. I suddenly felt the emotions my Mom felt as she read on her couch, maybe even worse. I realized that my Dad won't be there forever; that I wouldn't forever be his baby girl. I remember that night where I stayed up until midnight to finish *The Last Song*, believing that it wasn't true. I reread that beginning of the chapter over and over again, wishing it weren't true, but knowing for a fact it was. I now know it's a fact that you experience denial as soon as grief comes upon you, due to your book. My heart and mind instantly put me in Ronnie's shoes and my Dad in Steve's shoes. And in the end, because of that heartbreaker, I went to bed crying, "Don't leave me, Daddy."

Nicholas Sparks, I now understand that love stories aren't always about "boy and girl are in a relationship." They can be about family too. Your book had me crying harder than ever before. I guess I ended up like my Mom was when she read *The Last Song*, weeping deeply, and unable to stop. But unusually I say, thank you for making me cry. Thank you for having me realize that family is family, no matter what.

Sincerely,

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