

## It Takes Brokenness to Find It by Cynthia Carbone Ward

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Today is my father's birthday. If he were living today, he'd be 102. I cannot even imagine that. He was 67 when he died, and that's too young, but lately, as I stare at some hard realities of aging and mortality, I begin to appreciate the fact that he didn't have to endure a long period of frailty, pain, and dependence. My father was himself to very the end, brilliant and good and a force of nature, the most important person in my world, and I miss him terribly even now. Maybe especially now.

I find solace in these words from a poem my friend Naomi Shihab Nye wrote after the death of her own beloved father:

There's a way not to be broken that takes brokenness to find it.

So I'm drawing from a deep pool of love and and remembrance in my heart, looking for the strength and healing that brokenness may reveal, and I'm honoring my father on this gray Gaviota day. Here's a poem I am sure I've posted previously, maybe even more than once, that describes my feelings about him. In fact, it probably sums up the feelings many of us have about fathers long gone and gratitude unspoken. For what did we know of love's austere and lonely offices? We can understand these things only later in our own lives.

Those Winter Sundays by Robert Hayden

Sundays too my father got up early  
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,  
then with cracked hands that ached  
from labor in the weekday weather made  
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.  
I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.  
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,  
and slowly I would rise and dress,  
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,  
who had driven out the cold  
and polished my good shoes as well.  
What did I know, what did I know  
of love's austere and lonely offices?