

Fred Small

"Father's Song"

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I remember the man
Rising early in the morning
Smelling of starch and aftershave
Sometimes I would shave beside him
With a plastic razor and a cardboard blade
And watch his car disappear
Into the morning gray.
I remember the man
Talking so long on the telephone
His voice hard and polished like a precious stone
In command of itself and the darkness
He was not afraid in my hearing
Though sometimes he would rage
Without reason
CHORUS:
There's a man I hardly remember
Who would hold me in his arms without flinching
And tell me it's all right
I put my hands out to my father
Standing strong in the water
When I could not swim
I held on to him
It was all right.
I remember the man
Shouting from the sidelines at my football games
He'd razz opposing players by their names
My mother would plead, Oh please calm down
And he did when the game was over
He was so proud
Of his son.
I remember the man
Laid off last December
That's not what they called it
Twenty years with the firm
Eased out in favor of a younger man
Fear tugged at his voice
But he had other plans.
CHORUS
I dreamed last night of my grandmother
She was tall and I a child
But death was hiding in her house
In the dark I saw her

A rotting shell
And I cried out
My father took my hand
And led me from that awful place.
Soon my parents will be old
They will count their dreams and weight them
One by one
Two lives long together, a daughter and a son
Many things accomplished, many left undone
Some left behind
For something better.
And once before he dies
I will hold him in my arms without flinching
And tell him it's all right
I put my hands out to my father
Standing strong in the water
When I could not swim
I held on to him
It was all right

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