

A Route Plan From Dad To Dad
by Marissa Hoffmann

 **Distance 14y 2m 1w 3d 11h 20m**

 **Follow Signs for Home - Incident Ahead!**

We make a surprise visit to show off their grandson's first steps, but Mum's not cooking and Dad's not watching football. Dad calls *hello* on his way up the stairs, his hair looks like my Great Auntie Nellie's—tonged and lacquered—and I laugh. We all laugh together. He says he's going to take a shower.

'You should have said you were coming,' Mum says.

 **New Road Layout!**

At our son's Christening, Dad waits in a pew wearing a green scoop-necked top, white slacks, ballerina pumps. It's my first time kissing just-shaved softness stretched over cheek implants, faint stubble under makeup. Dad's bushy eyebrows—always blonder in the summertime—are brown tattoos, permanently surprised. We all are.

'Thank you for inviting me Dear.' Dad's voice is high-pitched.

 **Temporary Traffic Lights - Emergency Repairs**

I send two bouquets on Mother's Day, it doesn't feel right. There's been the reassignment surgery, a formal name change, voice coaching, the civil partnership and the relocation. Now they're going on a road trip across Spain.

'Darling, I thought he was leaving me for another woman,' Mum says.

 **This Route Has Tolls!**

Dad's on a ladies' ward, coronary angioplasty. She says her hair's a mess but everyone's kind. She says it's so nice to hear from me.

'What's your relationship to the patient?' the nurse asks me on the telephone.

► Your Destination is Ahead

When I say 'she' or 'her', I'm not saying his cuddles smelt of petrol from tinkering with engines, or that we trained tomato plants up the shed together, his stubby, square fingers needing my help to tie the green string bows and I'm not saying he was going to be the grandad who would kick a football with my sons.

Dad loves chunky jewelry, flower-arranging and—our now teenage—children.

Dad loves me.

'She's my father,' I answer, using a combination of words reserved for medical professionals, words that don't erase us.

Marissa Hoffman is an English flash fiction and short story writer. Her work has been awarded highly commended at *FlashBack Fiction* and *Flash500*, shortlisted at Bath Flash Fiction Award and Micro Madness at *Flash Frontier*. Recent published stories are at *Milk Candy Review*, *Bending Genres*, *The Drabble*, *StorgyKids* and in the Reflex Press anthology *The Real Jazz Baby*. Marissa is a fiction reader at *Atticus Review*.

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