FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Young Adult Nonfiction

What My Father Gave Me: Daughters Speak
Melanie Little, editor
Annick Press
978-1-55451-254-6
(July 31, 2010)

The relationship between fathers and daughters is deeply personal, often complicated, and lasts a lifetime within a daughter's heart. *What My Father Gave Me: Daughters Speak* is written by seven female writers who are also daughters. Each account is deeply felt and readers will undoubtedly relate to one or more of their stories.

There's Susan, whose father's alcoholism created a chasm between them even as she took responsibility for his unhappiness and inability to connect with her. Saleema's father disappeared when she was two years old, leaving her to continually look for a father figure. Lisa's father died when she was sixteen. Lisa says, "I don't think I've ever been as lonely as I was that year—before or since."

Each story provides a certain drama and conflict. Most have a redemptive quality, as though writing about their relationships with their fathers gained the writers clarity and some resolution to the complexity of those relationships.

Jessica tells how the ties between fathers and daughters don't necessarily depend on biology. Her chapter, titled, "How to Make Ice and Other Things My Stepfather Taught Me," tells how her stepfather, unlike the men who had previously come into her mother's life, was strong and caring. Because he stuck around despite Jessica's resistance, he became the father she needed. Looking back, she writes that no matter how unkind and dismissive she was to him, "I couldn't quite believe it. He genuinely liked that skinny, goofy, suspicious kid."

All of these stories are poignant and well written. Some recount sad or horrifying experiences. Often they revolve around experiences during the authors' vulnerable and formative teen years. Whether the stories are about loss, abuse, or the inability to make a significant bond, the writers seem to have made peace with their memories of their fathers.

In the introduction, editor Melanie Little gives some insight into her own father: "My mother may have been the mirror I saw myself in most often, but my father was my door to the

world.”

Little is the author of the short story collection *Confidence* and the award-winning young adult novel *The Apprentice’s Masterpiece.* She is senior editor of Canadian fiction at the House of Anansi Press in Toronto.

Penny Hastings