

DEAR JOHN

Yeah, I um...

[Sigh]

I seem to have a delayed reaction with grief... And I don't know if that's unusual. Umm... I, I, had a girlfriend... and we were really into each other, and we had a pretty amazing story really, about how we met and - this is this was when I was a teenager, I was at school. Anyway, we broke up and I think about a year later - I knew she was going out with another guy - and about a year later I got a phone call from her mother... to say that she died in an accident, in a skiing accident. And um, I would have been, still 17, I think. And she would have been 16. Or maybe 17. And I'd heard a report on the radio driving into work actually the day before about a skiing accident, at Ohau ski-field, saying that a skier had, um, had slid down a hill and, you know, their head had connected with the pylon of a chairlift, and next to the pylon was a pile of rubber tyres that they had been meaning to... put around the pylon to protect people from having that sort of accident... hadn't quite got around to it.

So, I remember going to the funeral and just feeling completely numb and not feeling a thing. And then my father died 30 years later. I wouldn't say I didn't feel anything, but I didn't cry, I mean, we were busy and organizing everything.

[Pause]

I mean I loved dad and we; we got on well in the end and we had we had our issues like you do with your dad, and, but you know I felt OK about my relationship with him. And then... these delayed reactions to grief, so odd aren't they, but... there's no denying the power of them. I got a phone call from my therapist's wife. I hadn't talked to him for a while, this therapist, I'd talked to him at a very important part of my life, and I used to ring him occasionally when I needed to. He was a wonderful man. Maybe everyone in therapy says this, you know; he was more than a therapist. But he seemed to me to be more of a therapist. You know... when I travelled... and had to talk to him at odd hours and he would always... you know, be there for me. Anyway, she rang to say that he had died. I took the phone call - I was down on the study - and I like... I walked up the stairs and I said to my wife... 'fuck!' You know. John's dead.

And when I said that my knees collapsed, and I fell to the ground. I fell on my knees. I mean, you couldn't write this shit, could you? It'd just be, it would seem like every kind of cliché. But that's exactly what I did. And started to cry. And, you know, my wife is quite wonderful. And she, she came over and comforted me. And I realized that with my father's death I'd had the, the doorstop of having John there as a kind of a dyke against the flood of the grief and then when he went, that went, and I was left with not having any barriers or protections up against that ocean of loss.

And I think... I think a lot of grief hit me that day.