

Saturday climbing by valgardson



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

At first, after reading Saturday Climbing, I found it just to be a simple plainstory. A story about Barry climbing a cliff and having flashed back about hisdaughter. But when I went over the story a several more times, I notice thecliff is actually representing the relationship between Barry and his daughter, Moira. It was a story that shows a single father perspective towards hisdaughter. W. D. Valgardson uses much symbolism in his story, Saturday Climbing, to help reader gain a greater understanding of his message. He uses symbolism into two important areas: objects that have symbolic value, and setting, which relates the relation between father and daughter. Many object in SaturdayClimbing have important symbolic value. For example, the “ chock nut, the wire loop, the carabiner, the rope”, represents the relation between Barry and Moira. “;Kfragile as they looked, would hold ten times hisweight.” Like a rope although their relation seems fragile, but it’sstronger then it seems. The cliff itself is another important symbol. It showstheir relation, as time pass by. “ Then, unexpectedly, the surfacessmoothed; the places where he could get a secure hold were spread farther and farther apart.” This quotation reflects the difficulty Barry encounters inhis role as a working, single-parent of a teenager. Barry’s secure hold on therocks, symbolise his monitoring of his daughter. As Moira becomes moreindependent, it is harder and harder for Barry to keep watching her and makesure she’s safe. Moira is going out late to parties and on dates. Barry can’t bewith her all day, and therefore can’t maintain her security. The secure holdscan also symbolise the direction the relationship between Barry and Moira isheading. It seems that they are distancing themselves from each other. Barry has trouble keeping track of what Moira does, and Moira is willing to let Barry intoher world by telling him what’s

going on. " At the same time, the numerous cracks dwindled until there was no place to set any protection." This refers to the dwindling of the relationship. It is beginning to crack, or break apart under the stress and pressure. It also symbolises the aspect of growing up that one becomes more independent. Barry will be able to protect Moira less and less, as she starts to find her own way. When Barry is stuck half way up the cliff, it represents that Barry has encountered a problem with Moira. " If he falls, he would drop twenty-five feet to the piton, then twenty-five feet past it before his rope came taut and held him. There was, because of the elasticity of the rope, a chance that he would ground out." This is also representative of the risks Barry is willing to take for his daughter in order to salvage their relationship. Barry would go to extremes for his daughter. The exert also shows that one fall and it could be all over. This is the case in the climb and it is the same in parenthood. A fall could prove fatal, and would lead to failure. In each situation, Barry is under enormous pressure to succeed.

Barry," "K set his foot on rough patch that would provide the necessary friction to hold his weight." The relationship between the main characters is tested throughout. It is often pushed to the edge, on the brink of disaster. Even though it may seem bleak, the relationship prevails. Just as Barry seems to be able to get himself out of the predicaments on the climb, the father-daughter relationship has overcome its own obstacles. " His daughter, eighty feet below, seemed so small that Barry felt he could lift her into his arms." Barry still views Moira as being his little girl. She appears small and innocent. She seems too young to be out in the cruel and harsh world. This view of her may never change, but Barry's level of acceptance of Moira's independence

will. " From time to time, she paused to pull loose the chocknuts and pitons her father had left behind." By pulling out the pitons and chock nuts, Moira is saying metaphorically, that she doesn't require her father's protection. She wants to handle things on her own, and take on obstacles (such as school) by herself too. " For a moment, he suffered vertigo, and the cliff seemed to sway as if in an earthquake." This is symbolic of the fact that Barry is afraid to go on because of the uncertainty that surrounds the future (especially concerning his daughter). He is fearful of changes that may come as a result of his daughter's independence and its impact on their relationship. Barry doesn't want his daughter to become like the " frizzy-hair girl". The swaying of the cliff could also represent the shakiness, and precariousness of their relationship, like when they fight and argue. The frizzy-hair girl represents a child who ran away from home. " For the first time, he had seen how much younger she was than he thought." From this quotation we know that she's not mature enough. She wasn't prepared to be independent. Her situation is for Barry to see as an example. The girl is like a bird trapped in a cage. The more the owner wants to contain it, the more it will want to rebel. And for the girl, her father has tried to trap her so much that she ran away, keeping herself from him. Barry is faced with an epiphany, a sudden realisation when he really sees the girl. " Once, when she deviated from the route her father had taken, she became stuck at an overhang. Not having dealt with the obstacle himself, Barry could not help, and had to leave her to find her own solution." This part of the story signifies the moment that Moira breaks off from her father and tries to go her own way. As expected, she had some problems but she was able to conquer them, and reached her goal. This is true in real life as well. It is essential for Moira to learn to solve

these problems on her own, because she can't rely on her Dad forever. This new route is evident where Moira has decided not to attend the local university. By going to one out of state, this is a new world that Barry knows little about, and will leave Moira figuring out her problems on her own. "The climb seemed agonisingly slow, as if it would never be completed." The ordeal takes what seems like an eternity for Barry. He sees his daughter in trouble and instinctively he wants to help her, only he can't. He is forced to sit and wait and see if she makes it. When Moira is all right, Barry sees that he's raised a daughter that can take care of herself. He becomes more accepting of the idea of his daughter moving on in life. "They sat side by side, sipping orange juice, their feet dangling in space." Barry begins to see his daughter as an equal and as an adult. They're now levelled with each other, seeing eye to eye. They've opened up and are expressing what's on their minds. "Sitting side by side", they are both independent individuals with their own ways.

"Below her, her father ever watchful, full of fear, smoothly paved out the rope, determined to give her all the slack she needed while, at the same time, keeping his hands tensed, ready to lock shut, ready to absorb the shock of any fall." This final paragraph shows the new approach to parenting Barry has.

He is now willing to be a spectator, rather than an active player in Moira's life. Barry is willing to give her space and freedom, but he will always be there to save her should she fall. Barry is ready to let Moira continue this climb solo. The story examines the relationship between parents and their children as

they grow up and become independent. Furthermore, it is a story about change of attitudes concerning when it is time for the kids to move on.

Saturday Climbing specifically focuses on two characters, the first is the main character Barry, and his daughter Moira. Throughout the story, we are told the relation between Barry and Moira. Early in the story, we notice that Barry is climbing up a cliff. Barry is a father who must learn to deal with his daughter growing up and wanting her independence. Moira, the teenaged daughter, seeks to escape from her father's protective grasp and explore the world on her own. She wishes to be able to face her own challenges in her own ways. Moira wants to take on more responsibility and freedom - two wishes her father is wary to give her. Barry feels that Moira is too young, and not ready to handle this new power. Moira, on the other hand, craves these things and believes she is up to the task. In Barry's eyes, Moira will always be his little girl that he's under no circumstance willing to part with. It is this image that Moira is trying to change, and replace with her own personal view of being an adult. However, as is the case with most other parents, Barry is reluctant to let his baby grow up too quickly. To him, it was just "last year" Moira lost her first tooth, and started kindergarten just "six months" ago. Barry has trouble dealing with the fact that his daughter is all grown up and looking to leave the "nest". What fears Barry the most is the diminishing need for him to help his daughter. Barry feels that he's losing his daughter because she no longer needs him in certain aspects anymore. For example, rides to activities, make her dinner, etc. He wants to hang on to his daughter for just a little bit longer to prolong her childhood. Barry does not want to be left behind. This fear of being left behind and forgotten is amplified by the

fact that Barry is single. When Moira goes off to college, Barry is all by himself. It is because of this outcome that Barry realises how much he depends on Moira for companionship.

Barry, despite being a working single-parent, makes a lot of time for his daughter. With the absence of Moira's mother, Barry tries to compensate as best as he can to fill the void. He puts a lot of effort in finding an activity they can both share an interest in. Through rock-climbing together, they have made great strides in strengthening their relationship. They are forced to rely and trust one another. It also gives Moira that responsibility and freedom she wants. The use of a controlling metaphor of the climb representing the development in the relationship between Barry and Moira provides an insightful look at their progression. As they climb the cliff, one can see the transition in parenting Moira. At the beginning of the story, we find Barry "sixty feet up the cliff", with Moira safely down on the ground. This is an ideal situation in Barry's mind. Later we see Moira begin her climb and she chooses to take some routes not taken by her father. She is proclaiming her independence, and proves to Barry that she can make it on her own. When she reaches him, they're now levelled with each other. Both equal, both adults. This is the first time, Barry realises that his daughter is grown up and no longer his little girl. At the end of the story we watch as Barry cautiously lets Moira go off to blaze her own trail. Barry remains ready to save his baby should she fall. Barry accepts Moira's independence and realises he can't continue on holding her back.

Another important aspect of the story is the use of flashbacks with the "frizzy hair girl". This character seems strange at first, but it is not until her

significance to the events in the story does it become clear how important she is. Her two quotes lead Barry to change his attitude towards his approach to raising Moira. "The caged bird proves nothing but the power of the captor", and "The world seeks balance; extremism begets extremism", help Barry realise what he must do. By caging the bird, and denying it its freedom, it only feeds its hunger for it. When the bird is finally let out, it will try to get as far away as possible. The girl with frizzy hair was this bird. She had an over-protective father, and she decided to go across the country to get away from his control. This helped Barry understand that the more he tries to keep Moira in the "nest", the more resentment there will be. The other quote says that extreme actions have extreme reactions. The more Barry tries to control Moira, the more likely she is to rebel. If Barry continues on controlling Moira's life, he would fall like Ron. He would fail to be a father and end up like the frizzy hair girl's father. The best thing Barry can do is to minimise his "protection". The "frizzy hair girl" represented what could happen to Moira, this triggered a turnaround in Barry's ways. In a sense, the "frizzy hair girl" acted as a catalyst. The last bit of the story is demonstrative of the fact that Barry has a different role as a parent from now on. Barry is now there to provide a safety net should Moira fall. He will be there ready to catch her. Other than when his help is asked for, Barry is now an observer watching whether or not he did a well enough job in raising his daughter. Moira begins setting off climbing a new section of the cliff, and this time she will lead.

She starts out boldly up the unknown cliff, ready to tackle the next section of it. As she climbs, she begins her journey through adulthood, and perhaps

one day she will be leading her own child on this rock. At this point, Barry no longer sets the protection for Moira. She is expected to do that for herself. As a loving father, he dreads the day that it seems he is no longer needed. By the end of the story, Barry reaches the realisation all parents must come to in time. He realises that it is time for him to let his daughter go. He will remain there next to her supporting, but his job is limited. When there is a need he is ready to step in and resume his role as a caregiver. Until that time comes, he will give Moira "all the slack she needs while, at the same time, keeping his hands tensed, ready to lock shut, ready to absorb the shock of any fall." In conclusion, I think this story refers to most families. Children will always grow up and leave their parents some time in life. Parents should support them and be happy instead of holding them back. For example, my brother just came back from Japan. When he left Calgary, my parents were pretty worried about him having trouble being independent, but my parents supported him all the way. But if my parents had held my brother back, he might have lost a chance to work in Japan. Indeed, a parent caring for a child is important, but how much they are caring is even more important. Too much might not give them a chance to mature, but too little might ruin their life. So parents have great responsibility in looking after their child, so much responsibility that it might give them stress which might affect their life.