

# [Red handed](https://assignbuster.com/red-handed/)

Title: I was a disappointment to my Dad 2004 was the year my father developed a taste for schedules and routines. It was, and still is, his way of making sure that things are in order, and I suppose it was his way, when we were younger, of ensuring there was some consistency in our daily lives. When Mum left, I think that was all he could think to do – giving us something fixed, something to fall back on, something to let us know that our world still stood firm even as his was falling apart. It was never really the same, our world; he was never really the same. Mum has always been the spontaneous one.

She had always done things whenever she felt like it. I suppose that was why she could leave us just like that. She had never been one for commitment. After she left, my father came up with The Schedule. We had to follow it, and by then we were so desperate to keep one parent that we paid attention. He took great pride in us following it for a while. The Schedule gratified him. I remember Fridays were pizza days; they only had the regular pizza then, not the triple cheese extravaganza they do now, something for which I am utterly thankful; on Thursdays we took trips to the parks.

It did not matter which park it was or how many times we had been there before. We just went on Thursdays. Matt, three years my junior, and I, would see how many flowers we could find that had at least an insect hovering over them while Father stared blankly into the distance, occasionally, he would smile. Then there were Tuesdays. On Tuesdays, I was to finish whatever assessment Dad asked me to do. I would put in my best effort to have them done to perfection and always long before he came to pick us up at Aunt’s.

I would, upon entering his new black BMW, brandish out the assessment to show off to him and I had always been a honest boy so he never tore the answer key out before. Each time, his eyes would light up and tell me I was a good boy and off we would go home where he would mark my work and explain my mistakes (which I rarely have) to me. Followed by that, we would be off for dinner at the place I chose but since Matt was still six, Dad did not give him any assignment which meant he had no say in what we were going to have for dinner and he always beg with me to choose Macdonald’s.

The World was going to be all right for one more day. Dad’s smile told me so. That particular Tuesday, the day of The Incident, I came face to face with something I wish I never again have to face, but yet I see it time and again, lodged in my guilty mind. The day started off the same way. It started off right. I think that was the worst part, the fact that things could have just taken sudden about-turns. Breakfast, school, Aunt’s. I was nine and I remember feeling, no, knowing that I had forgotten something. That vaguely familiar sense of unease that plagues everyone starts with the innocence ofchildhoodmistakes, I suppose.

What was it, the thing that I had forgotten? I could not remember. Put away my toys? Done. Helping my brother tie his shoelaces? Done. So what was it? Something was out of order. Something did not belong. Five more minutes left before we had to leave. Ignoring that nagging feeling, I dragged my brother out of another series of ‘ Transformers’. He as usual quietly obeyed me as he begged, “ can we have Macdonald’s please? ” That was then the realization that dawned on me was like a slow burn. I could feel my skin prickling. My blood seemed to become warmer as it made its way to my head. I had not done my assessments!

Dad is going to ‘ kill’ me but I only have five minutes left how much can I finish? Oh no! Instinctively, I reached for a pen and told my brother he could watch for another five min. The time slowly ticked by. Five minutes, four minutes… I was out off time! That was when I came up with my idea an idea I wished I had never done. I flipped to the book and found the page I needed to copy. Done! Just on time! I then dragged Matt out of Aunt’s who was as always decisively happy we were leaving. Sitting on the stoop, I could feel Dad finding out I had copied but there was no way because my work was usually perfect. Where is Dad? Where is he? Huh? Where? Where? Why is he not here yet? Huh Bro? ” Now Matt was whining about Dad being late. In my unease, I could not even tell him to shut up and he must be surprised by my stillness because he casted a curious glance at me. Before Matt could ask what happened, Dad pulled up along the kerb, his car coughing up exhaust fumes. I pretended to sound as if everything was normal. I waved my assessment at him, my banner of proof. When we reached home, Dad turned over to the answer key and started marking. Little known to me, I had left three evidence there.

Firstly, I had left a blue pen mark on the answer key, Secondly; I was doing Primary 5 work so I could not have possibly have gotten full marks, lastly, I had sneezed while copying down the answers so there was still mark of my sneeze. Then I saw that flicker. I saw that flicker in his eyes. Realisation, disappointment, rejection. It was only for a split second but, yes, it was there, the disappointment. I could almost hear him: “ How like her mother she is; how like her mother she is. ” He must have known that I had seen the flicker too because then, just like that, I could see him almost willing himself to cast that critical thought aside.

I Know he was not able to do so because two years from The Incident, when I do talk to him, something which had grown progressively rare in those days, I still see that flicker in his eye. I never showed him my work after that day and I now mark my own work, he too never asked. Now, every Tuesday, I am often so overwrought I can only find comfort having left a mark on the answer key. I would always recall that Tuesday when I was nine, It was that Tuesday when I saw that disappointment come to stay in my father’s eyes and no, oh God no, that for the first time, it had been me who had put it there.