

Hey Dad, can you feel it? First pitch, organ playing, 7th-inning stretch, warm weather. [Sniff, sniff…] I smell baseball in the air. Opening Day is tomorrow!

Okay so I'm a fan. Those of you who aren't, it's fine, I forgive you. Yes, I know, the sport has had its share of negative publicity and more, and like most people, that hasn't sat well with me at all. But I can't help it. It runs through my veins like my father's blood runs through my veins. He taught me the game way back in the day. I remember those days when sometimes just as I'd had about all the pretend doll playing a girl could stand, he'd come up and say: "Dale, corre, busca el guante." "Go, run, get your glove." How I loved that tantalizing escape outdoors to realness. As a kid, I got to know the best of both worlds. I've always been so thankful for that. Through the years my Dad and I played catch, went to games, watched them on TV, and talked stats. Sure, maybe not your typical father-daughter relationship. It was better. It was lovely. I so miss that.

No other time of year brings those memories to life more than baseball season. And no other flick connects both for me like "Field of Dreams." You know, that movie where Ray Kinsella (played by Kevin Costner) ends up helping some baseball ghosts once banned from the game find peace on a baseball field in Iowa. Have you seen it? There's a lot more to the story than that, and it's one of the most spiritual and hope-filled movies I've ever seen. I highly recommend you watch it. Its ending still packs an unexpected kick even after countless viewings. It touches my heart like no other. In the last scene, Costner encounters his father-ghost and they have that classic exchange about heaven you've probably heard before even if you haven't watched the movie:

John Kinsella: Is this heaven?

Ray Kinsella: It's Iowa.

John: I could have sworn it was heaven.

Ray: *Is* there a heaven?

John: Oh, yeah. It's the place where dreams come true.

Ray: Maybe this *is* heaven.

Costner's realization at that moment of what his heaven on earth is — his family, his home — is a poignant reminder of what is truly important, and is a mirror imagine of *my* heaven on

earth. Just a baseball movie? Think again.

My catch-playing days with Dad were once part of my heaven on earth. And as I look back, I realize my relationship with Dad would've been just as special without the game. Baseball was a bonus. And I am ever so grateful. I look forward to that day when the two of us hook up to play catch once again. That would be a dream come true. Just a game you say? Not for me.

"Earth's crammed with heaven, And every common bush afire with God: But only he who sees takes off his shoes."
– *Elizabeth B. Browing*

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