

POEMS FROM THE HEART:
A FATHER'S LOVE



JOSEPH DINOFFER

Illustrated by Xandy Smith

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	7
Dedication	9
Introduction	10
Birth	12
Little Fingers	14
Birth Day	15
Little Girl	16
Blue Eyes	18
Braids	19
More Than That	20
How Much Do I Love You?	22
A Little Voice	24
Puddle of Light	26
Freckles	27
The Gift	28
Little Pony Girl	30
A Visit to Germany	32
Helpless	33
One Day Is Enough	34
Wheelchair in the Sand	36
Sweet Sixteen	38
Twenty-One	40
Aging Past Twenty-Five	42

DEDICATION

Ever feel umbilical,
With a fully grown adult?
Supernatural relationship;
Exclusive membership.

Unconventional soul mates;
Linked with unconditional love,
It's a daddy-daughter's destiny;
For life's obstacles, a remedy.

If she ever needs my help,
There's not much she needs to do.
With just a text or call she knows,
I'm there with poetic prose!

Worry is the only downside
To a daddy's bond with daughter.
I try to let go and let God,
But why is that lesson so hard?

To my daughter Kalindi,
Named for a sacred river,
We are eternally connected.
With love, this book's injected.

You coach me. You inspire me. You are my most dear friend.
I love you and am so proud of the woman you are becoming.

Your Forever Daddy

INTRODUCTION

Every parent believes “their” child is very special – and they are right! Whether you believe it’s part of our God-given sense of being or a Darwinian trick to continue the species doesn’t matter. Otherwise, how many would take pleasure in changing diapers and soothing teething babies. This book of poems is specifically about my sense of “Daddy” with my own daughter. However, it is probable that hundreds of millions of other fathers have experienced similar feelings towards their own daughters. Such is the nature of life. Let me take this opportunity to make a belated confession and apologize to my daughter.

Kalindi was a very talkative little girl with an immense imagination that manifested itself when she created “pretend” little worlds to play in. She was naturally drawn to activities like dress-up games and creative role-playing with dolls and stuffed animals. I confess that these games were difficult for me to relate to and I impatiently and minimally participated. Until she was ten and started playing tennis, I would jokingly ask “Where is that son I could play catch with?” Perhaps it had to do with the fact that I remember few occasions when my hard-working father took the time to play catch with me while I was young. He was so responsible in supporting his family that he never had time to go to Little League baseball games or watch tennis matches. It’s a fact that parents tend to compensate with their own children to make up for perceived shortcomings in their own upbringing. That said, I did find one way to inject myself into my daughter’s creative “play” worlds.

There was a story I used to tell Kalindi when she was young that resonated powerfully with her. Although I am not a very talkative person, I stuck to that one story and told it again and again with new “episodes” to keep her interest. This one story developed a life of its own and spanned a couple of years and beyond. Between the ages of three to five, she must have heard it at least once a week and sometimes daily. The ongoing theme of the story was cooperation. Since parenting is seldom taught in schools, it is my hope that this concept may help other families as well.

Once there was a small village where two little girls lived. They were both six years old and had loving parents. In fact, they lived next door to one another and their homes were identical except – one of the houses was happy and the other was sad.

In the “happy” home, there was flowers in the yard and the sun was always shining through windows lined with beautiful flowers. The family living inside was always smiling, laughing, and having fun. The little girl had many toys and regularly received wonderful gifts from her parents. They all cooperated with one another, making this a truly happy home!

However, the “sad” home was very different. The flowers in the yard had died from neglect and only weeds poked through the poor excuse for a front yard. The sky above this house was dismal and gray, emitting a continuous cold drizzle. Toys? The little girl had few toys and those she had were old and worn. The family members argued daily and the little girl was unhappy and cried often. It was a very sad home. Nobody cooperated with anyone.

After this introduction, I would create different little “sample” stories of daily life events which gave opportunities for the little “happy” girl to cooperate with her parents, as well as describe how the “sad” girl would not cooperate.

Our daughter got to choose which home she wanted to live in. This ongoing story was one of my parenting highlights and my heart glowed when little Kalindi would ask me, “Tell me about the happy little girl. And, what about the sad one?” Thank goodness, she chose the happy home and became a cooperative member of our family! She has been that way ever since. Whether it was this simple story-telling or just her nature, we will never know. Cooperation was the first “long” word she could pronounce. I like to think this story made a difference in all our lives.

Eventually, at ten years old, Kalindi finally agreed to try tennis. In short order, with passionate long hours of practice and consistent instruction from her Dad, she became a ranked junior in Texas and began to play national events just two years later. Unfortunately, she sustained a serious hip injury at 15 and was sidelined for the rest of her junior years. There was, however, a silver lining to the injury. She applied that same tenacity to school and became an award-winning student at a leading business school. She was still cooperating with her higher self and those around her and to this day has become a motivated young adult with passions and aspirations of her own.

The poems in this book describe snapshots of the “Daddy” emotions I experienced during her first 25 years on this wondrous planet. Some are funny, some are happy, and some are sad. Life spares no family the challenges we must all face sooner or later. It is my hope that these poems strike a chord in the hearts of other fathers and the daughters they adore.

Joseph Dinoffer

BIRTH

An explosion of emotions,
Time stood still.
No concerns,
Except one.

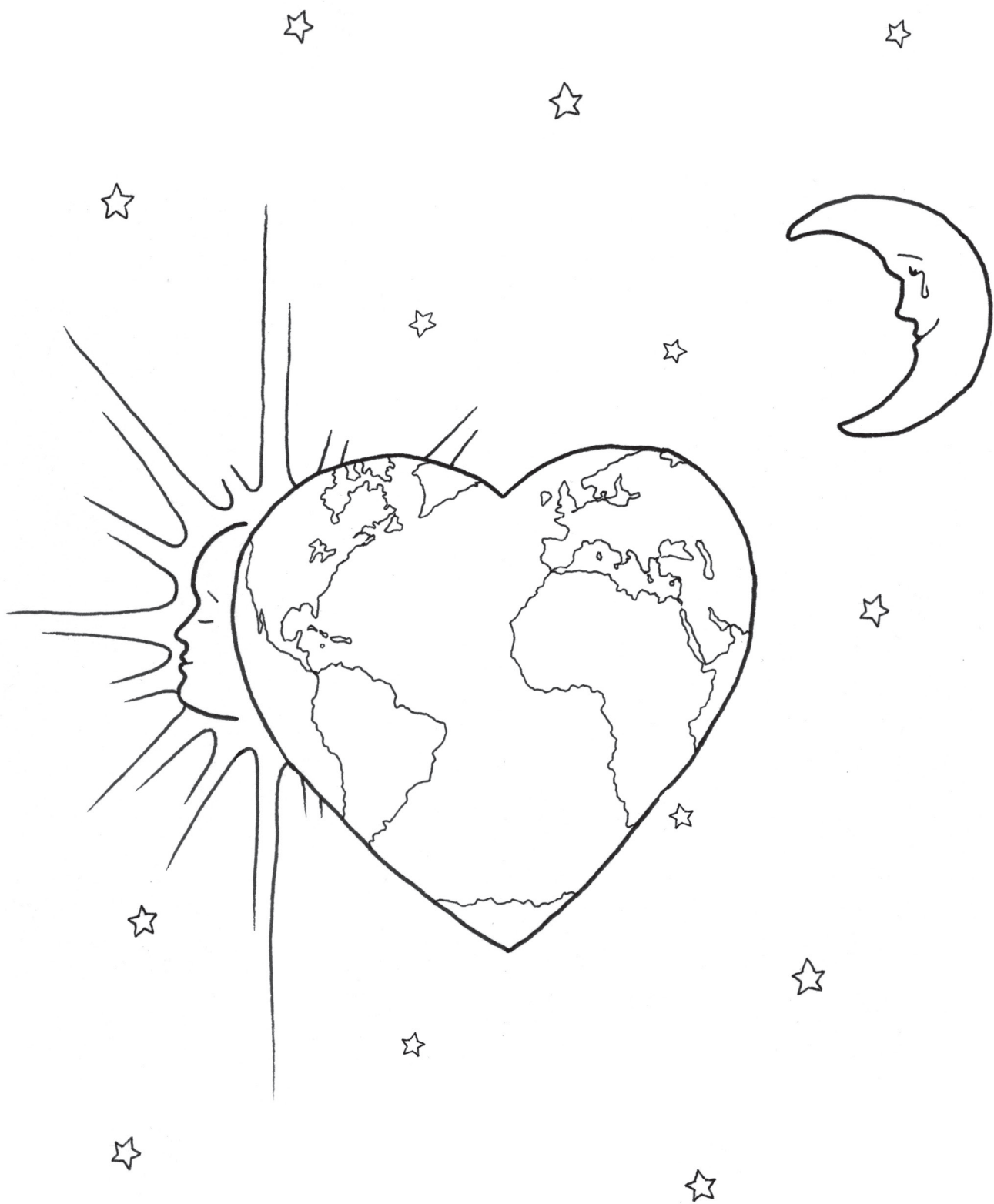
Hearts pumping
Like speeding trains:
Lights, monitors,
Doctors and nurses.

Nerves and sweat,
Mixed in a drama,
Which performs ...
Only once.

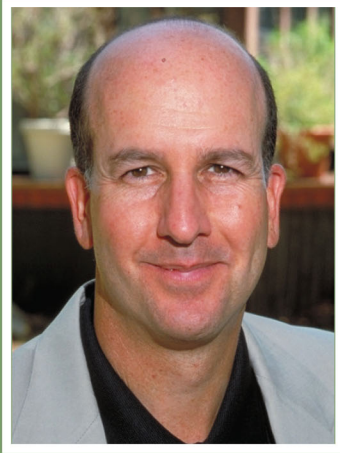
Every hour
Around the globe
Are thousands born
With this intensity?

Impossible.
Otherwise,
The world
Would stand still.

Minutes or hours later
I'll never know,
Our daughter was born
And I was crying.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Joseph Dinoffer is best known for his innovative contributions in the tennis and pickleball industries, but perhaps his most creative interests include being a recorded percussionist and spending a lifetime intrigued with and writing poetry.

This book is the first of a series of poetry books entitled “Poems From The Heart” and shares the heartfelt connection of a father with his daughter. Future volumes will touch on topics of life, love, and philosophy.

“Joe” (as he is known in the tennis industry) is a former professional tennis player and coach, having travelled to over 50 countries to conduct hundreds of coaching workshops with a primary emphasis on self-esteem building for children through accelerated learning in sports.

He has been awarded several national awards and is the author of eight books and more than 20 DVDs. He has also published several hundred articles in national magazines and presented numerous instructional television tips on the Tennis Channel. In 1994, “Joe” founded OnCourt OffCourt, Ltd., a company dedicated to serving the needs of tennis, fitness, pickleball, and physical education specialists with innovative training aids and educational tools. Today, he has designed and manufactured more than 150 creative products being distributed and used in 100 countries worldwide.