

***Superman* was Never Intended to be Viewed in Black & White**

In black and white-

Superman,

the 1978 version.

An image of Christopher Reeve,

fists piercing confines,

fleeing Earth's atmosphere,

forever framed by the 8x8

television.

It's funny,

the things we remember-

Birthdays. Moving.

Endings and beginnings-

a yellow Rider Truck.

Bittersweet dichotomy:

California, sun-filled classroom, friends.

Pennsylvania, gray cinderblock walls, nuns.

9th birthday, looming.

Constant guest, anxiety-

dread of unpredictability.

Childish hope and a mother's promise-

a gigantic slumber party.

Sleeping bags, pillows, and innocence

dumping into a tiny,

two-bedroom rental.

A problem of

"Absent Parents"-

a future moniker and

timeless definition.

Naked in vulnerability,

working to convince parents.

Making excuses,

assuaging concerns.

Details

unimportant now.

The storm and leaves ripped from branches-
water-logged mass, carpeting the slick streets.

And the T.V.

our first newly-purchased, (used)

Color TV- the main event-
broken.

It was the blood
they noticed first.

The leaves.

She said it was the leaves.

The Volkswagen Beetle had slid
right into the telephone pole.

No, no. She was fine-
a broken nose- a few broken ribs.

The house emptied,
I watched her sleeping.
Familiar pangs of
disappointment and resolve,
quieted with overwhelming love.
Light from the screen
casting shadows
in black and white.

Missed Signs

The bus pulls away as it does every day,
a snapshot of yellow in a framework of gray.
After lessons and learning relayed and conveyed,
connections with peers convincingly made,
My role of a student so perfectly played-
I stand at the corner, alone and afraid.

I fear not my surroundings, nor the path that I tread...
The route is familiar along with the dread-
the resolute realization of what lies ahead.
Lord knows her "condition" can leave her half-dead.
My need for security withers, unfed.

I'm turning the corner; my house is in view-
anxiety turns a darker hue.
Oh my God, if you only knew
the hell and the heartache I've been through.
All the signs... you've misconstrued-
while you, Mother, have come unglued.

The Powdered Man Lives in the Grand Canyon

Lies and secrets, one night of tears; weary footsteps edging near.
Unearthing a coffin silenced for years, each corner sealed shut from lookers and see-ers,
Pry off the lid.
Swallow the fear.

How many nails over time held it tight?
Denial-my mother's reaction that night.
Instruction, "We won't tell your father, alright?"
Accusation... "Something *you* did" to invite.
Torture; Mention his name in vengeance, in spite.

Relief. The casket's wide open; look. See?
Velvet ashes, live and breathe.
Tucked inside Mom's mahogany,
chips of bone handled gingerly.

Year by year, an eating cancer; malignant, voracious-a silent attacker.
To memories blank and questions unanswered; only a ghost, a family malefactor.
Protecting the psyche from
splinter and fracture.

In a Western Holy Land trespassed; a secret ceremony held at last.
In Pilgrimage with poisoned stash- two denied the sins of past.
In caverns borne to rivers passed-tributaries long and vast-
In Native's long-forgotten cache... Grandpa's ashes, blessed and cast.

The canyon keeps the powdered man; weather, erosion, and time demand
a mixture of death and grains of sand-seeping into hallowed land.
Dust to dust.
Not a monster-just a man.

Selective Memories are the only Gift of Dementia

I send you a little note today.
Stationery bought with you in mind,
knowing you would admire
delicate purple flowers
bordering scalloped edges.
I see you- savoring
every word
beneath your smudged magnifying glass.

We talk on the phone
every day, reminiscing.
We laugh.
You say you feel better
just hearing my voice-
you and Daddy will visit soon.
I used to call those words “pie-crust promises.”

It's hard to fathom
the missed opportunities,
the years you spent nursing a hangover
instead of my children.
With all of the states and circumstances
separating you from me,
my bitterness softens
with your ebbing memories.

Some of your days
are better than others.
Some days, you say
my dad is dead and ask me
if I've seen him lately.
You shout, “My time is almost up!”
Now the world has its own circumstances,
a virus to freeze us in place-but not time.

I write my memory on creamy-white paper (with purple flowers.)

We take flight down the pier of the beach,

you carrying our shoes in one hand,

my toddler-hand tethered to your other.

Weaving through board-walkers, we chant, "Aua, Aua, Aua!"

*in your German tongue. Grey-winged seagulls chuckle and mew
encouragement of our hot-footed flight.*

*A California pier stretches endlessly, and my blonde hair is
a comet's tail reaching back to the sea.*

Someday, I'll write a Poem about your Death

I'm not ready to write about your death yet.
I'm not ready to make a poem about you dying.
I'm not ready to share what I felt in the days before your last-
with anyone,
not even this paper.
I won't put those words in ink.

I'm not ready to unlock the door I closed.
I'm not ready to take in those sights.
I'm not ready to meet the sounds and the smells;
not yet.
Even as I write,
I won't invite my senses to live.

You must wonder how I can write about
anything else. I am sorry. I wonder, too.
I think, maybe, a poem about your death would make it real-
to me.
I'm not ready.
I won't believe that you are gone.