Connections

Rachel Steiner
Concordia University - Portland

Follow this and additional works at: http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean
Part of the Nonfiction Commons

Recommended Citation
Steiner, Rachel (2008) "Connections," The Promethean: Vol. 16 : Iss. 1 , Article 43.
Available at: http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol16/iss1/43

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access by CU Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Promethean by an authorized administrator of CU Commons. For more information, please contact libraryadmin@cu-portland.edu.
“Daddy come hooooome!”
Jacob held the portable phone to his ear with both hands.
“I’ll come home soon squirt; I love you little hulk! Give me to Momma now.”
“Otab.”
“Hey, give me a kiss little dude.”
Three year old Jacob made a spitting sound into the speaker before he handed the phone to his mom and ran to find his action figures.

She gazed out of the picture window at the rose garden below. They had planted it together last August, before he left. The wind blew through the bare, thorny garden and ruffled the flag bearing stars stitched on a blue field, followed by stripes of red and white.

“Hey baby…” Oh, his voice, it had been so long since she’d heard it—so deep and soothing. She listened to him talk of the desert, of the dry 130 degree August heat and the occasional friendly fire from the National Guard unit that he met with on patrol. In her hand she held the latest letter, written two weeks ago. The envelope was crispy and dirt stained. She rubbed her thumb over the address, something he had touched, she thought. It was a way of holding his hand though mountains and oceans lay between them.

“Oh, the guys and I adopted a mutt…yeah, they have a lot of stray dogs around here…huh?…yeah, he’s got a little box outside to sleep in; I named him Jacob…Oh man, we got this new body armor that actually withstands more than one direct hit before it shatters, it’s pretty cool, I mean they’re made of ceramic, so we have to be careful not to drop them too many times either or else they’ll break…yeah, it’s pretty heavy too, at least forty-five pounds by itself…yeah, I gotta go fer now…love ya babe…”

“Talk to ya later babe.” She put her hand on her hip and grinned into the phone, one last teasing comment before she hung up. “Hey babe, ya know that cute blue dress I picked up on Thursday? I think I’ve got plans for it in a couple weeks, I don’t know, maybe September 2nd when your ship pulls into port?” The response on the other end was barely discernable but she giggled a bit like a seventeen-year-old. They hung up and her face turned to a pout of frustration and annoyance. She had been talking half the time but couldn’t remember a word she had said. She stooped to pick up some stray Cheerios and a banana string. Tossing the phone onto the living room couch which held the unfolded laundry of white booty socks and Batman decorated training underpants, she walked down the hall to glance into Jacob’s room. He sat in a patch of sunlight; his blond high ‘n tight haircut made him look like a little Marine, but his blue, perceptive eyes were bright with childish innocence.

“Jacob, buddy, what’re you up to big guy?”
He looked up, a serious expression on his face.

“Momma, play with me!”
He stood and grabbed her hand to pull down into his play world of sunshine and imagination. He handed her a Santa Claus doll and resumed his play. He held a small GI Joe in one hand, a Batman doll in the other. Batman was dictating something in a fatherly tone to the Joe.

“No son, go to bed…”
The Joe began to weep, “Daddy, Daddy…” Joe obediently ran off to bed, still crying.

Andi looked at the Santa doll in her hand, then attempted to comfort the Joe doll with it. Jacob didn’t seem to like this very much. He grabbed Santa and made him frighten the sleeping, weeping Joe.

“Rarh, rarh, rarh!” Joe jumped out of bed and ran to Batman.

“Daddy, Daddy, Daddy!” This time Batman was protective.

“Oh, son, don’t cry.”

Batman, after comforting the terrified Joe, marched over to Santa, delivered a lecture on his impropriety, and promptly beat up Santa. This accomplished, little Jacob went on to create more scenes in which the father-son figures represented by
Batman and GI Joe acted as a team and destroyed opposing forces, built houses, cleaned the house, and raced cars. So absorbed in deciphering his world and trying to make sense of it, she felt like forgiving his frequent boundary pushing temper tantrums and refusals to conform to any guidance. That afternoon had been a gooey orange battle over the lunch of Spaghettios. The walk to the library was even worse. After wiping tomato sauce off the blue and white striped walls, she thought, He's too old to be throwing his food everywhere like a little baby, isn't he? He can speak just fine, why is he acting out all the time? He had refused to leave the library after they had found his favorite superhero books, had sat down on the sidewalk every chance he got.

"NO!!! I don't like our house!"

When they were at the library he had proclaimed he didn't like the library so he didn't want to go there. Mr. Contrary.

As she leaned her head against the wall in his room, her eyes caught a glimpse of scarlet by the bunk bed. Pictures from the past several years hung crooked by thin fish line string. There was a family portrait of the relatives down by the lake, the dogs, the in-laws, the punkish cousins. Another picture showed a close up of a dark-haired eighteen-year-old girl, curls swept back from a lacy, pearled wedding dress. One next to it showed the same young gal holding the gloved hands of a Marine in dress blues. She wore a silky scarlet dress. The reflection of herself and her husband grinned at her from inside the frame. "Look," they seemed to say, "We're together here, you'll be back together soon, life will be normal again."

Her eyes smiled this time as she returned her gaze to the patch of sunlight, shimmering around Jacob's hunched over, moody silhouette. Oh, she rubbed her hand across her lower back, no time for a frothy, sugary bubble bath, not much time to spend on the girly part of herself. Her forehead was sweaty in the South Carolina humidity but the strawberry cream scent reached her memory as she brought her arm up to her face to massage her left temple. Deep breath. Ah yes; it was the perfume Dan had given her for her birthday. It smells like love, she thought.

Jacob broke out of his world for a moment and demanded her attention.

"Mo—omm, hold Twansformer Bumblebee..." Taking the blue-eyed robot figure from his hand, she held it, then pointed to a 3x5 unframed, peanut butter smudged portrait of her Dan by the light switch. It was taped up at Jacob's eye level. It was the standard boot camp mug shot.

"Who is that guy, Jacob?"

Jacob stared at the light switch, got up, hurried across the room, and pulled the picture off the wall, disregarding the two finger printed pieces of scotch tape. He put his finger on Dan's nose. His eyebrows raised emphatically as he fixed his green eyes on his mom's.

"That's my Daddy."

He repeated this several times to make sure all was clear, then replaced the picture sideways on the wall. He sat back down, content, preoccupied in his sunlit square; tears edged around her unpainted eyelashes...she hadn't worn mascara for days now.

"I know, big guy," she whispered, "that's your Daddy."