April Watson

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Learning, Knowing, Being…

Workshop Submission #1

First I’ll tell an elaborated memory…

“The Origin of Fear and Coercion”

The fist time I felt fear was when I was lets say around four years of age. My sister was seven and we were playing at the park a few blocks from my grandparent’s house. It was nestled in the midst of average houses behind the oddest-looking elementary school I have ever seen. My sister and I were racing around the tiny set of stairs and slides giggling feverishly, a castle standing before us and alligators were snapping at our heels. My father sat on a park bench near by fiddling with his dinosaur of a flip phone. He’d glance up every so often when one of us screeched too loudly. He would give us one of his famous looks. This one was sharp and direct saying, “quiet your voice” without even having to say word. We would giggle quietly and go back to our child’s play.

My father suddenly received a phone call and stood to take it. He wandered a little lost in the chatter of the conversation. My sister and I’s play turned a little more mischievous as it usually did when we knew that adult eyes were otherwise preoccupied. We decided to conduct an investigation of the playground around us; inspecting rocks, flowers, and weeds. We deciphered the sharpie scrawls on the ceilings of the slides pretending to discover ancient hieroglyphs on walls of caves or tombs. I was busy translating these pictographs when my sister called to my from below the slide. I slid down to meet her.

“What is it?” I asked.

“I found something,” she said enthusiastically, her words buzzing. She pointed to something resting near the base of the slide. I starred at it for a while wondering what it was. It was a long, bright yellow package of some sort of candy.

“What is it?” I asked my sister.

“Banana Laffy Taffy Rope.” She sighed like it was great delicacy, “I’ve always wanted to try it, and mom never lets us eat this kind of candy.” I looked at the candy again and something felt wrong. My sister picked up the package and we saw that it had been opened. Of course being the young children we were, sand covered, pre-opened Laffy Taffy didn’t seem to bother us. So we partook in the opened sugary confection without hesitation.

When the candy had been nearing its end my father’s voice appeared in the background calling our names. We retreated from our gator-infested castle and met him by the bench. He saw the wrapper in my sister’s hand.

“What is that?” My father asked, one of his signature glares beginning to spread across his face. My sister looked down at her hand.

“Oh. Well it’s Laffy Taffy. We found it under the playground. It was opened so we thought we would try it.” Now let me tell to how much we were not expecting his reply. In my four-year-old mind this scene might have been played out as more dramatic than it actually occurred but that’s not the point. My father’s eyes bulged and his face went from slight glare to full fury.

“Why on earth would you eat and opened dirty piece of candy? We do not eat random things we find on the ground! You could get sick from it! It might even be poisoned!” my dad shouted. We both began to cry hysterically, assuming that we were poisoned and going to die. My father then realized his mistake and tried to comfort us but for at least the rest of the day I was convinced that my stomach was hurting and that I had definitely been poisoned. Till this day I do not like banana Laffy Taffy and have dreams about the fear my young mind experienced that day.

Something silly…

“Today”

I wake up to the early morning with the most irritating itch on my back. I roll around until I finally silence the little sucker… I fall back asleep, and wait for Kelly. The second time I wake up to my sisters, Lil and Penny tearing each other’s faces off in the kitchen. I’m so tired of having to get in the middle of things and mediate their constant bickering. Females…Kelly would know what to do, but she’s not here yet so, I fall back asleep. I wake up the third time to the sound of shuffling outside. Someone is walking up our drive and I know who it is. It’s the mysterious woman who comes to the house everyday. She wears this god-awful outfit that I swear she has never washed because I can smell her a mile away. I can hear her coming up the steps, feet shuffling through the snow, and I race to meet her at the door. She gives the door a slight tap and I lose my cool.

“Get off my damn property you stinky stupid bitch!” I yell. She takes something out of her pack and sets it by the door, “for the last time we don’t want whatever you’re selling!” She casually retreats back to her vehicle. It astounds me that after the profanity I use she still feels the need to return the next day and the exact same time. Kelly never shows me what the woman sets on the porch but I know it’s no good. I’ve taken the liberty to alert the so-called “authorities” myself but so far I’ve heard nothing back. I turn around to Lil snickering at me. She sits on a stool, filing her nails.

“What?” I snarl, knowing she has nothing positive to say.

“Oh nothing,” Lil sneers, “just thought that this time she’d get the hint.”

“Bite me.” She gives me her Cheshire smile and hops off the stool. I sit by the window to make sure the woman doesn’t return. After a while I saunter to the back yard. I check the holes in the fence and cover up any unsightly objects with dirt so Kelly doesn’t see them. I go back in the house and make sure that everything is where Kelly left it. After I finish my thorough inspection I go to my room and find Penny curled up on my bed so I plop down next to her wait for Kelly to come home…I fall back asleep.

Three hours later… a noise rattles me from my nap. It takes me a second to recognize where the noise is coming from. My eyes shoot open as I realize that the sound is the sound of the garage door opening. Kelly is home! Kelly is home! I sprint to the door. I can hear here every move. She puts the car in park and shuts it off. She fiddles with her purse. I can smell everywhere she has been today. She stopped by the post office and had a burrito for lunch… no wait, a taco not a burrito. She opens the door and I can hardly contain myself, I begin to shout her name.

“Kelly! Kelly!” she calls to me and opens the door. I jump up on her continuing to shout her name, “Kelly I missed you! I thought for sure you weren’t coming back!”

“Mr. Snuggles! I missed you so much you fluffy little mutt! How was your day my handsome puppy?”

And finally a piece of me…

“No Matter the Reason”

You are the knots in my back and the feeling of an effortless stretch.

The pouring of my soul until there is nothing left.

You are the crinkle in my nose and the sun blinding my eyes,

The reason why I curse and why I criticize,

You are the loss of innocence sitting on my shoulder

Reminding me that all children must grow older.

You are the thoughts in the corner of my mind

Boasting of your irrational homicide.

You are the judgment on the tip of my tongue,

The needle pricking the seems undone.

You are the reason why I buy a new journal

The reason why I kick instead of jump the hurtles.

You are why I’m bruised and bandaged,

Why they refer to me as reckless and outlandish.

You are the reason I forgot how to rhyme

Spitting your poison into every line.

But, you are the reason why I know how I want to love.

You are the reason why I remember to look up.

Why I brave the night,

And always come first in the fight,

For whatever is worth fighting for, no matter the reason.

You reminded me of who I am and whom I intend on being.