

The Song

I hear the song play again. It surprises me every time because it is an old tune. Not one that I would think would be popular with a young crowd but then again, it is timeless. Didn't it attract me once, all those many years ago? A young version of myself that I no longer recognize. Was it not the soundtrack of my life for a time?

I find it ironic that the song chose this moment to play as I drive to my ex-husband's wedding. I want to change the station or will myself to lift my hand and hit the power off switch. Yet, I do not. As if subconsciously, I want to feel this pain. To torture myself with my memories. After all, I do like the song, I tell myself. It is catchy and sweet despite the not so happy ending. The broken that I am, apparent.

The truth is I am only going to my ex's wedding for my son. I only ever do anything for him. I can put away the anger or frustration and the differences, to make his life not so broken as my own. After all, I played a hand in his story. The sadness as well. For this, I act. A Grammy-award winning actress. I pretend to be this new age divorcee who plans, preps, and is friends with their ex. Secretly, I am sickened by it and often wonder if in arrangements such as these, where friends-after-heartache are the norm, there is not one of the halves suffering and giving in when truly they do not want to.

I feel good. My hair and makeup complete. The older version me confident and wise. I am comfortable in who I am and pleased with my accomplishments. Why then, am I choosing to lose myself in my old life? Those younger years where life was busy and unorganized, and frankly a bit of a shit show. What does that purpose hold if not to ruminate too long with thoughts of past wrongs?

"Let it go", I chant in my head and am thankful the damn song ended and the broadcaster's voice, thick and handsome now tantalizes my mind.

I switch the radio off and raise the air conditioner valve as I can feel the heat come off me like a fire rising, burning the tiny hairs along my arms and neck. Damn hot flash, I think, and put away any thoughts of anger. Tidying them neatly in a locked box within my brain. One of those secret diary kinds you receive for a milestone birthday present as a kid. The likely truth is that I am nervous, or scared even, to parade myself in front of my old life and watch as eyes (aged by

years) pierce me with opinions and perceptions likely nowhere near to the truth. Fake smiles, this I know. I won't hug today. I stopped that in my late forties. Small chat. The weather always the easiest. But my flesh will not touch theirs. Never again. They aren't my people.

The song was an anthem to our love. Oh, how he made a production to announce it wildly at any event. Standing on tables, reaching for a glass of wine, and bursting into song matching each lyric almost to perfection. The crowds laughing, hooting, and wishing they were us. I would sheepishly smile and think to myself how very lucky I was. I was so loved, so wanted. Feeling smug. A party was thrown in my honor each time the song came on. He made it known I was his girl.

In my early youth, I was over the moon in love with this show of affection. As a young mother, slightly annoyed and tired but overcome with joy in those moments. The later years, the dreadful ones I have coined them, I hated it. I would watch as he began his performance in wonderment. I would look at all those friends and family who watched on in dismay, that they were blind to it all. Angry that their eyes chose to believe the spectacle despite the everyday actions or better yet the actions only moments before. How could they be blinded? Ignorant to the fact that the love that he was performing was nothing but that, a performance. I caught on. So why not them? Jaded, I would watch on and yet, in the depths of my soul I would still believe, ever so slightly, that there was some truth. That I was his girl. His only girl.

"Mom you look beautiful," Michael whispered as he reached over to me for a hug. It was one of those hugs where for the briefest of moments I felt a little body in my arms, nuzzled deep into my neck. A sadness lingered as I held my son at arm's length. A young man now. Not the little boy whom attached himself to my hip. Thankful that I still remember the joys of holding his tiny body in my arms. Today not so tiny. A full two heads taller. Shoulders straight and proud. My son was the best of both my ex and I, and each time I looked at him I could not help but feel a pride so full onto myself I could burst. Every heartache, every disappointment, every ounce of sadness I felt in my marriage was worth it. To have brought him into the world.

The ceremony was short. The sun now beating on all of us as we wished the couple congratulations. It was supposed to rain today. Was it not good luck to rain on your wedding day? Perhaps if it did the heat would let up some. Not a cloud in sight though. I would find myself looking up searching as the afternoon progressed.

The blue floral sundress I wore was light and airy. I stood with my thoughts away from the crowd catching a glimpse of my son making great efforts to watch over me. I am ok, I motioned and hoped that my eyes wouldn't deceive me. The deer in the head light look. Friends of old made their way to say hello. Niceties interchanged. A small part of me happy to see them. Happy to see they were all well. Not knowing who they were any longer but having the resentment dulled some over time. Funny how easily a life slips away and those who were so much a part of it vanish.

I hear my ex laugh and hate that it still rings so familiar in my mind. Once, many moons ago, it made me smile but now it hangs on, haunting me almost eerily. I don't like it. The time ticking in a slow-moving fashion. "You look so good," the women I once knew comfortably coo like I was some sort of bauble hanging for display. I could only offer a simple thank you. The frightened little girl in me thought perhaps they felt sorry for me. A fake attempt to make me feel wanted here. I brush those harsh thoughts aside and focus in the now. I look to my son again and remember why I am tormenting myself. I am here to support Michael and nothing else.

The sun sat heavy mid-sky now. I lift my hand to block the brightness from my face. Even the sunglasses can't seem to block the piercing light. The giant orb showering one last ray before setting. It will be dark soon but I do not mind. Moments like these, where the hot flashes subside and the coldness sets into my bones, I don't mind menopause. Where everyone still swelled from the heat, and sweat beaded on brows wetting through their fragrant armpits, I am now grateful for the beaming sun warming my bones as it says goodbye. A quick shift and my body now cold. Funny thing, hormones. I stopped long ago trying to understand them. The natural cooling of my body a reprieve. Welcomed.

The bride, young and pretty with an edge was everything my ex adored in a woman. I thought how he should probably offer her a glass of water. I tried to tear my eyes away from the scene. He with his go-to beverage, jacks on ice, she hungrily eyeing it. Her tattooed arm sleeves boldly displaying against her cream colored gown pressed tightly over a swollen belly. How many months now, I wondered? Soon my Michael would have a sister at the age he could be a father himself.

Finally, after rounds of beef on sticks and deep-fried mushrooms, the evening arrived. The music began to play and I said my goodbyes. I made the effort. It wasn't too terrible. Michael was

happy. He whispered he wished he could leave too and I childishly savoured the omission. I patted his cheek and slowly made my way towards the exit.

Before I understood what was happening, I could hear the crowd. The hoot and hollering sounding a distant memory. And then the music played and a familiar voice belted out the lyrics. My heart stilled for a brief second as I let the moment sink in. As the words spilled out onto the parking lot, I slowly opened the car door. I felt a sort of closure. A sigh of relief. A letting go.

It was never for me. The song he sang. I was never his only girl. It was his song, and finally, after so many years I realized, I was ok with that.