

Daddy and the Radio by Sheridan Ameo

My father raised me on classics. He hated- although he never used the word hated, too vulgar, too definite for his little girl- Springsteen and the rest, artists I ought to know but don't because I didn't grow up with them. He'd play Frank Sinatra on his clarinet, and hymnal chords on his old guitar- in perfect condition, my father may be messy (like me) but he's very organized (like me), meticulous (unlike me), and careful (not like me at all)- and the Beatles on our CD player, back when we still had CD's and the TV was on the table we now use for the chess board that's in the music room because the new TV is too big and now hangs on the wall in the living room.

Every Sunday, when radio station 9.39 FM, National Public Radio, WNYC (where NYC stands for New York City, and the W is a hold-over from when radio stations east of the Mississippi River put a W in front of their name, and all those west of it used K) stopped broadcasting the news and shows and programs, the radio was taken over by an old man who knew more about music than anyone I've ever heard. He'd play old songs, and when they finished, he'd take over the radio and just talk in his unmistakable scratchy voice, giving each song a little story, painting a vignette of a much younger boy who was devoted music as his father was. Jonathan Schwartz is his name, although I had to look up his last name, for although I've heard it countless times, I remember him as Jonathan. And although I dimly remember learning of it around two years ago, it still gave me quite a start to read that he had been fired from his show for harassment allegations. I never liked his show, and I complained brattily about it, but I appreciate the time spent with my father listening to him drone on. My father and I loved the radio. Of course, so did my mother and sisters, but it was special for the two of us. When he'd drive me to school every day, we'd listen to the news and the stories and the programs of people telling their stories, and sometimes the voice on the radio would say in their satin voices that the program contained mature content and was not for children, and if we were in the car alone my father would glance at me out of the corners of his eyes and he wouldn't move to turn it off or change the channel and that, more than anything else, made me feel grown up. And on Saturday mornings- although the memory has buried itself for having been gone from the forefront of my mind so long, there was Car Talk. Two men who were certainly what I would now describe primly as "characters" with heavy accents (Brooklyn? Jersey? I can't be sure without listening to it again, and I think that would just ruin the memories I've built up of them) who would talk listeners through the most stressful of automotive problems with their quick wit. My father would walk on the treadmill or grunt over kettlebells in the unfinished basement's unfinished gym while I sat on the cement floor putting together puzzles and eating Special K cereal bars from their crinkly wrappers. Radio was special to us. Eventually I brought one of the radios into my room so while I sat at my desk and did my homework dutifully on the (vintage) mahogany desk with the light pink blotter underneath my paper to spare my poor desk from my heavy-handed writing. I listened to programs where those with perfect voices would read out the most peculiar stories and I fell in love. Sometimes, two nights in a row they would read the same stories, but I never minded, in fact, I loved them more for it. The one that sticks with me the most is a tale of girls who were imprisoned, and they turned into silkworms who spun silk for a prince until their silk turned bad and they went into cocoons and emerged, beautiful, with wings. Of course, that's a crude description, a faded memory of a story I heard just twice when I was eleven, but I liked so very much. I'm not sure if I'd like to hear it again. What if I like it better without the details?

None of that has anything to do with the Beatles, or music in general. I can't promise it adds

context to the point, but I'm a storyteller. I'm good at loads of things, but I love to tell tales. I have a passion for that, more than anything, and- I like to think- a gift for it. Or perhaps I'm simply a shameless narcissist who insists that her history be written down because she thinks everything to do with herself is terribly important. It's probably a bit of both.

Yellow Submarine was one of my favorite songs. I didn't know the lyrics, but I loved the image of a yellow submarine, and my father would smile and describe it to me. I listened to other Beatles songs, and I grew to like a good portion of them, but I don't remember them with the youth and clarity of Yellow Submarine. I didn't know much more about The Beatles (besides that they were Brits who had odd taste in submarine décor) until I picked up one of those thin paperback biographies for children, where the subjects had their heads drawn all blown up on the cover. It detailed their boyhoods before talking about them as a band, and the chapter on Ringo stuck with me. A sickly child with an exotic name, I decided that he was my favorite Beatle. I haven't researched him since, because people have a way of disappointing you if you learn more than the fun facts.

There's not a cohesive thread to all of this, no special occasion I want to mark or point I want to make, I just need to get my entire life down on paper, quickly, before I lose even more detail. Is sixteen too young to live in fear of forgetting your childhood? I'm not a forgetful girl by nature but I can't afford to risk losing the memories of simple things like room layouts and radio programming and the flimsy logic behind my favorite Beatle. The trouble I do have is that I had a dream childhood, and I spent every moment of it dreaming of being a Grown-Up Adult who could do Grown-Up, Adult Things. Now I'm nearly an adult, and I've already moved away from home for school, and even though I'm young, my childhood is over. I'm in the process of reliving memories from my childhood, not creating them. I don't know what to do about that, the knowledge that my days of being a kid, unburdened and immature, are over, and my life is just beginning, but I'd like to stay where I am. How am I to move forward with the rest of my life? I certainly don't know. So instead, I write feverishly recounted recollections out in the hopes that it will keep me young, keep my girlhood fresh and alive, because I'm unable to cope with the fact that it may not be.