

A Small Excerpt From My Autobiography

Insecurity shrouded me like a cold blanket. I wanted to cry, but the tears evaded my pale cheeks, held back by the numbness, the shrill, shrieking numbness that flowed through my veins chilling my blood. Comprehension escaped my every thought. My entire world had just collapsed instantaneously, like a fragile tower built from a pack of old decrepit playing cards. Yet my skeleton held me tall, erect and fixed to the spot. A manikin's existence seemed comparable to mine. These thoughts and feelings can never be erased. They seem to be impregnated into the very structure of my biological make up, as if they are, in some strange way, a new set of genes. Provoked into action by a sight, sound or smell, each time the grooves of these emotions become etched deeper into my whole existence. Forgiveness being my salvation. Memory my tormentor.

My mother's death has left a long lasting rippling effect on my life and I am sure my brother's too. To some extent it even spills over into my children's lives. My children's days have lacked the richness most grandmothers radiate to the existence of their grandchildren; their caring hands, their warm, gentle touch, their unchallenging, patient ear; knowledge and wisdom that only our elders possess through life experiences; wise words that may have infiltrated and enriched my children's thoughts, shaping, moulding and inspiring even an infinitesimal part of their lives. But they are too naive or could it be too innocent to understand how this would affect their own mortality.

I was six, just a baby really. When I look at my own children I get totally blown away. Blown away by the whole impact of this entire life-changing event. Even now as an adult I'm not sure if I could cope with such a traumatic experience. How did I cope that morning when I was awoken by the strange sounds of hushed voices? I do not even remember who told me; was not a member of my family. Not a single warming comforting face amongst any of them. From that moment on, my brothers, one younger, aged eighteen months and one older than myself, aged eight, lived with our grandparents and our aunt and uncle. We were whisked away from our roots that were, never to be returned to, or to be mentioned again; until we as adults felt the need to retrace, recollect and look at things in hindsight for our own satisfaction and personal needs.

Many times I pondered and dwelt on the notion of revisiting those past concrete visions, visions edited by my own fair hand, captured and stored in the archives of my own being. At times, I wonder if I have all the pieces. I wonder if I collated and collected them as it really was. Did I miss something? Was that intentional? Do I really need to add, adjust or amend my visions and knowledge of that day? The ones I have become so accustomed to. Do I wish to discard my comfortable old slippers in exchange for a new pair that may irritate and cause blisters? These questions pose an eternal dilemma within me. I do have a want, a desirer, a yearning you may call it, a yearning, which burns, burns for the truth. Yet truth has a partner, a partner called fear. This enormous fear hangs over me, like a guillotine hangs above the head of its victim. Would Mother Nature call that self-preservation? A disguised, dark angel, sent to protect me from the ills of truth?

My life was totally transformed that spring morning. I was propelled out of a secure, warm, safe and caring environment, into a world that seemed at the time like a cold, stark, lonely and barren existence. This place was miles (not only in distance, but in emotion) from my normal surroundings. As an adult, I can compare the contrast of these two different settings with slightly more rationality. But then, all of those years ago, at that very moment in my life, analysing and evaluating the structural and materialistic things around me must have seemed an insignificant notion to have.

I could not think about, let alone analyse, anything beyond my own tormented feelings of sheer pain, anguish, neglect, betrayal and above all anger. Yes anger! This was by far the overriding feeling. At times the anger was quashed by guilt, yet this sense of guilt burned deep inside fuelling the fire of the anger once more. Anger that my mother had left; disappeared, forever out of my life. Bereft of the tender, loving, affectionate hands that so often comforted me and tucked me neatly onto my warm, cosy bed. This bedtime thought always evoked copious tears to drench my pillow late at night. How dare my mother do that! Did she not know that parents live forever? Did she not realise that I would be the one that would be left to take the role of mother to her youngest son, my brother? This accolade I did not wish for. I was far too young to grasp the enormity of this duty bestowed upon me by circumstances.

As a child you invent mysterious coping strategies to evade the inevitable truth. For weeks, after the death of my mother, denial was my master. I would slowly unfasten my eyes, as dawn's uncaring hand stirred me from my serene slumber, shutting them firmly again in a flash. My logic at this age made perfect sense, I thought that if I did not see the world, then it did not exist. If the world did not exist, then I was not part of it either. If I were not part of the world, logic would have it, that I must be somewhere else. So if I were somewhere else, then that awful event had not really occurred and pain would no longer consume me. Consequently, if I were no longer in pain, it stood to reason that my mother would still be alive. At this point my body would swiftly transport me back to truth, the grinding of my empty stomach would compel me to open my eyes once more. As a child I always hoped that my eyes would be my betrayer; visions of dreams that could be dispelled and forgotten in a trice. Once again I would ardently shut my eyes, mustering up the entirety of my thoughts and powers in a last ditched attempt to dispel those awful, distressing events, hoping that they were all just feigned.