

Realities Merge

To be a valiant, masked vigilante, who would have the power and drive to stop an evil mastermind, was a dream of mine at one point in time; the headline of all the papers around the world reading: “The Superhero Saves the Day” or “Courageous Vigilante Strikes Again”. A moment that defined the daily routine of play and imagination in my life, I wished that I could have been a superhero: power of flight, super speed, phenomenal strength, or maybe heat vision. Usually, and most natural, it is only a phase that some young boys would go through, beginning around the ages of two through four; a phase that they would grow out of around second grade: the age when reality begins to set in. The fantasy would end, as the young child would awake to see the world and become a rational individual. Yet, for me the phase lasted longer, a great deal of time longer. For me there was no end, no rationality; for me, I awakened so many years later.

As far back as I could remember, I have always hoped, no better yet, craved to be Spider-man. I always thought that the life of Spider-man would be perfect. I dreamt of swinging high above the skyscrapers in a populous city, thwarting crimes, punishing hardened criminals, having the ability to climb a wall with no use of a harness or any other contraption, and being able to lift small vehicles. To have a female like Mary Jane Watson by my side was kind of yucky at first, but would become a bonus as I grew closer to being a flirt.

When I was younger, probably three or four, whenever my father and I would play superheroes, I had to be the good guy just so I could be Spider-man. Spidey was my idol, and I had to act just like him. My father, being the actor he was, portrayed many of the arch nemesis of Spider-man very well; from Doctor Doom to Venom it didn't matter. He even pretended to be villains that he would create; it never mattered though what villain my father played, just as long as I was the ‘friendly neighborhood Spider-man’. One early evening before preparing dinner, with smells of tacos flowing from the kitchen into the living room (we called it a front room), me and my father's imaginations flowed from our minds like the Mississippi:

From the rooftop of a Taco Bell, “Spider-man do you really believe that you will stop me?” my father would squeak; he was the Vulture this day.

With a grin upon my face I pointed at my father, “Of course, I stop you every time. Don't I?”

With imagination intensifying, the Vulture's metallic wings now spread, as if ready for a flight about the town, my enemy – my father, began the famous evil doer speech, “True” he paused, “but today I have an ace up my sleeve...after all we are in Las Vegas.” He pretended to press a button on his wrist-computer console which opened three doors, of the vulture tanks that was surrounding me. “Now you must fight my bird machines...” With a ghastly laugh the Vulture flew off, “...lady luck is on my side tonight spider-freak.”

The battle between the machines and me pursued, with my self being the victor of course. Afterwards, I followed my enemy to his lair to defeat him and spoil his evil plans, just as I always do.

Now, when I try to remember these events I seem unable to separate the games from dreams; they seem to weave into each other with only the complete obvious to decipher. Sometimes I can not even tell decipher my memories from what I wish times were like; it can be quite frightening. I do remember one time (at least, I believe that it is a memory) running around in my Spider-man underwear over a pair of shorts and wearing a white t-shirt, I was preparing for another day as the hero. However, my father wanted to be the good guy so bad that I would only portray the scoundrel if I could pretend that I was Spider-man controlled by another villain. He accepted the terms and the game continued. I believe that was the only time that Bruce Lee and Spider-man were to meet. It shocked me when the game ended and I was the not the victor. I could only think, How could to heroes fight one another and both still win? They could not, one must fall, and since I was pretending to be under the influence of dark forces I had to be that one.

These games that my father and I would play lasted until the accident a few months later. However, the end of the games did not mean that I would let go of pretending; in fact, in some ways it became worse, evolving into a dream for the future.

Years later, after completing second grade, my parents decided to move to Madison, Wisconsin so that our family could live in a better neighborhood and for my sister and I to have a chance of receiving a better education. After moving from Chicago, I had to make new friends in a new city (hell, in a new state), which was not easy since I did not want to move in the first place. So, instead of being social I relied on my imagination to keep me company. For years that was all that I needed, at least until I found other boys who enjoyed pretending. It was strange, we were all different but the only common link was the love of pretend. Joey was big on playing with cars and pretending they were always racing or blowing up. Anthony was quiet, shy, and studious, very intelligent, yet he enjoyed moments in the surreal. Recess throughout most of elementary school for me and my associates, was spent running around acting like complete fools. Each one of us was our favorite superhero: there was a Superman, a Hulk, a made-up hero, and me the Spider-man. Each break from the books and studying we spent recess pretending; we actually were playing tag, but our imaginations led us to believe that we were chasing down felon and when tagged, we became the villain. Actually, that game was something that I created; the guys did not play such a game before my arrival, well at least not at school or in the company of others. It was a fun new game that we enjoyed and I thought that it would continue through middle school. Oh, I was so wrong. Apparently we were too old to play childish games like that; there were images to worry with. The cool guys would laugh at our immaturity and the pretty girls would giggle and snicker right along with them. The truth is that it actually began to die out late in the fourth grade; only a year in the surreal was spent contently. The guys become addicted to dodge ball and kickball. They were my friends so I decided to join them and leave behind the games of imagination. However, I did not care what others thought of me, I only wanted to play, that was all. At least that was what I thought.

When I arrived to middle school, sixth grade the year of a new beginning, the dreams did not end. There were nights that I would pretend to travel from the basement to my bedroom, by way of webbing, and then I would fall to the bed and arrive upon a roof of a skyscraper, to continue the web-slinging. Sometimes I would even be in class when the daydreams occurred. Sitting at the desk with a writing tool in hand, tapping and falling from sleepy fingers, I would leave reality and begin to daydream. Into the surreal I would float:

I feel so serene at this very moment high above the city, so peaceful web slinging from rooftop to rooftop above Chicago; sticky webbing leaving my wrist and attaching itself to concrete, my means of relocation. Swinging from one building to the next, skyscrapers whizzing by while specks are far beneath me squirming about and wind thirty miles per hour or stronger trying to force me to follow the will of gravity; I only smile, it feels so great. As I travel, watching over the people, I notice something strange below, a rectangular shape weaving in and out of a mass of small blocks; it is a van trying to evade the law in a mess of traffic and innocent bystanders; time to work. Letting myself freefall to the vehicle I land upon its roof with a thud, "Pull over...now." The criminals try to lose me, make me lose my balance and fall to the pavement streaming by, but I shall not let go, I will hold on. Just as I began to break the windshield, to force the miscreants to halt, the driver begins to speak, "Wake up, wake up. The teacher is looking at you." This guy must be out of it, yet once again he speaks, this time grabbing and shoving my shoulder, "Wake up, come on man."

The entire city becomes hazy and all the people, vehicles, and buildings...everything begins to swirl and evaporate. I blink and all of a sudden, I was no longer a man but a young teenager, staring up at a young man with blue eyes. It was a friend and he was trying to wake me. I was no longer Spider-man. I was back in math class; I was in the rational again. It was becoming scary and I knew that I had to do something before I fell into the arms of the state and led to an asylum.

I thought that eighth grade would be totally life altering and females would become my sole drive for waking in the morning. I was only half wrong. I did leave behind much of the fantasy but I still wanted to be a superhero. It was not my main focus like all the years before, I was too busy being a flirt and causing ladies to fall in love with the mack-daddy known as Casanova (yes that was the nickname that I received during the middle school years). The more I turned my attention to females and relationships, the less I thought about superheroes. I thought that I would finally be over the whole obsession. I was not quite to that level.

I must have been more intrigued with what people would have thought of me if they were to find out that I wanted to be a superhero than I thought. Actually, I was just stretching the reality of the situation. I did not know why I was so afraid; it was all in my own mind, the thought of being a superhero. It was really just a game that I had not let go of, it was the same as playing with toys; no high school student would admit to playing with toys, but I just know I was not the only one. I was not crazy I just had a wild imagination. It was okay for a high school student to want a dream to become reality; right? Some teenagers dreamed of attending college while some others fantasized about

making loads of money, but me, I wanted to save the day. I wanted to make a difference in the world. Leave my children a legacy to aspire to. Is that so wrong?

I knew that the dream, the fantasy, was becoming an issue when I would daydream about saving the idol of my affection from plunging to her doom. Her name was Emily Bethea. I was willing to do anything possible so that she would kiss me; sing a ballad to her, write poetry or a song with her as my inspiration. I was dreaming about her in a perilous situation just so that I would receive a kiss for braving the harsh incident and saving her. I wrote the poem, and gave her flowers for Valentine's Day, but there no daring rescue; no kiss. How disappointing. That was one dream that would stay surreal, but at least I looked forward to bed time.

I remember one day while walking to English, late slip in hand with nobody around, I started to act as if I were web-slinging. Throwing out my hands, just like my role model, and webbing leaving my wrist attaching to the surfaces propelling me closer toward my destination. At the moment I did not realize how ridiculous and disturbing the sight was, a freak show with me as the main attraction. Later that night I thought about how strange I truly was and, for the first time in my past recollections, it bothered me. There was a reason for myself being a social outcast. True I did enjoy my alone time and creative inspiration periods, but I did not hang out with people, maybe because they feared me, they were unsure of my sanity. That was too much for me. I knew that I had to let go of the fantasy and join my peers in the real world.

I know the difference between fantasy and reality, I know where each of them belongs and how to adjust life between them; I have always known, even from the time I was young. I realized this one evening during eighth grade.

At the age of thirteen, I lay in bed one last time to dream of being a superhero. As I lay there in my cozy and soft bed, the moonlight sneaky in through the blinds, I began thinking "After this evening I will no longer hold a vacancy for such nonsense in the surreal, dark corners of my mind." I knew as I laid there with eyes have open, fatigue creeping upon my thoughts and body, that no longer would I play superheroes as if I were training for the day it would be real. My mind was finally prepared for accepting the notion that there would be no radioactive spider to bite and transform me, there was no chance of being a superhero, and there would be no valiant efforts on my behalf in a mask. I accepted that fate and decided that my destiny would be rational, and God would take me to that path. My imagination would morph from a means into an asset; it would not be a way to live but still be a part of my life.

I lay in the Mahayana of dreams ready to guide myself through the field of villains, superpowers, and crimes one last time. I lay there thinking that I would fall asleep as a child and awake as a man. Yet, I soon found out that that night when I dreamt of being a superhero, it was not for the last time. I fell asleep as a child only to awake as a new child. With all my intellect and knowledge, lessons, relationships, and rational dreams I still craved to be masked and feared by criminals; even after enlightenment, I still dreamt of being a superhero. That was then, but today things are new. I notice now that I have the imagination of a child, no longer do I have the desires of a child. And that is perfectly fine by me.