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My Childhood in Another World

by Jamie Moore

My childhood seems to belong to another World, where children walke home from school unencumbered by rucksacks, technology and the neurotic projections of lost parents. I recollect endless sequences of hot and balmy days, full of confused possibilities, with the merciless potential of Space Dust settling in the mouth like a dissolving ferret. I had an American accent that screeched words as if I was full of caramel and a helium IV, and a mother that appeared to be an extra from Charlie's Angels somehow parachuted into Greater London, where her Playboy hair and can-do attitude abraded the fixed Elnet smiles of crimpolined Rotary Club wives.

I remember my father, the coffee brown suit, crisply starched white shirt and Old Spice spritzer, leaving for work as I returned merrily from school, wherein there was just enough time to acknowledge he was real. There was never recognition of what he did, where he did it or why there were prolonged absences. We took no ownership of him and he took no account of us, or so it seemed, and that seemed normal. I lived unrestrained in my innocence whilst my mother cried herself to sleep every night.

I was conditioned for change to only become apparent with visceral circumstantial evidence. After his disappearance life remained gleefully untouched, ignorance buttressed by a time vacuum, a distended space continuum where every piece remained the same and nothing collided whilst the fulcrum was quietly removed. It took a decade to realise the impact and another decade to find the broken pieces. A lifetime to stitch them together.

My father's mystery was foreshadowed and embellished by his absence. He never understood how popular he was by not being present, would never know how deeply I felt his presence, counterposed by the arrival of shadows and strangers at our door. Every whispered conversation my sisters and I joined at the dining room door contained the harsh bite of weathered men, distempered and desensitized by grand schemes heavy with collateral damage.

My childhood belonged to another world of perpetual invention, a world designed to fend off query and quarrel, which painted my father in technicolour and not into a corner. I failed to understand he was already in a corner, trapped in a nether world of service and spies, tethered to duplicitous masters and shackled by his suppressed morality. A sleeper, a spy, a double agent. A middle eastern traitor, lost in an arid ether. My father seems to belong to another world, a world of shadows, and my childhood is absorbed by it.

Timed exercise:
Clueless, not sleeveless

Jazz-funk.

It collided with my mod phase and there was a period of time, a significant gap of about 3 weeks, where I couldn't be sure which tribe I was affiliated to. I'm not sure it was clear to anyone that knew me either, certainly not James Parkinson and his mob, drenched in their Gabicci, Lyle and Scott, and Fila. The thing with the mods, all it required was a parka and a pair of stay-press from the market for a tenner. Job done. The jazz funk business was expensive, but Parkinson had the goods, and I wanted to be Parkinson more than I wanted to listen to northern soul and pretend I understood Quadrophenia. Apart from that bit with Leslie Ash against the fence.

The Farahs just about did the job on the lower section, but paper-rounds and Saturdays on the produce section at Budgens secured the route to jazz funking success, a ticket to the Parkinson big time. Up to Soho, flush with a wad of hard earned cash, flouting £10 notes like unused Kleenex, and into Wardour Street for the cake, cherry and icing. A Sergio Tachini track top, with detachable sleeves, blue and white horizontal stripes, an ode to Queens Park Rangers no less. A look that married navy Farahs with Diadora shell toes that screamed hello ladies, flying to LA to see Frankie Beverly and Maze at the LA Troubadour. Fancy it?

I managed to wear the top to school once. Got it out at lunch time. Played football. Even let a few of the lads wear it. Those sleeves got zipped on and off. It was big time. Returned it to my school bag, awaiting the chance for the glory shot as it walked me home.

Returning to my bag at the sound of the bell, I unzipped it and pulled out two sleeves. The remainder of the top, that would be the primary section, was gone. Nicked, never to be seen again. Just a pair of sleeves and a whispered army of sniggers. That was always the problem with jazz-funk, nobody knew what it was, or how they became a part of it; and like life, there was money and glamour there, somewhere, accompanied always by opportunists and thieves.