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EXTINGUISHED SUPER HEROES

Sarah Lynn Andrysiak

"But my daddy is my hero." I was only five, and an overly-faithful girl toward her dad. I dreamt of my parents smiling and laughing together. In the dream, my dad would twirl me around in the big blue sky with the sun sharing its warmth on both of us. Up until that silent summer day (when I was only five), I had believed that my parents controlled the whole world. Not only did they control the earth, but they were the only force that could save me from monsters, raging big sisters, strangers, and the dark. As I stared at the "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood" tape late that summer evening, I prayed for my daddy to come home on time. I imagined my dad whistling his way through the door and throwing his arms around his lovely ladies. With one hand on my blanket, one eye on the door, one on the TV, one ear to the alley, and the other to my mom's pestering voice, I sat for my dad.

Occasionally my mom would stomp through the kitchen with the phone to her ear, leaving a rattling of knick-knacks in her wake. I was left rattling, too. She always demanded of the ill-fated bystander, the location of her husband. The poor bystander tended to be one of my dad's fellow workers. As my mom described them, they were the low-class construction workers who found no purpose in life other than partying. Defensive thoughts crept around my tiny head.

"My dad is as good as Mr. Rogers," I would say to myself as if refuting my mother's criticism. "Shouldn't she trust my dad? Duh, Mom, he said he was at work!" I couldn't comprehend the ability to disbelieve my Superman.

Soon, after the last inquiry call, my mom decided to be the hero. She was going to save my dad from his awful state of drunkenness (with a bonus of wife-ly humiliation). So, my mom with her bitter smile and I with my blanket, set off through the streets of the suburbs.

"Hey Mom, I'm scared of the dark, are you?"

"No, Sarah. Look, the moon is shining. Hey, keep your seat belt on, you can't your head out of the window, just lay in the backseat."

She always ruins my fun. I don't understand why my mom carried me off in the middle of the night. I just wanted my dad to carry me to bed. Meekly, I ask over again if she is afraid of the outside. Too determined to find the locale of her villain, my dad, she completely ignores my inquiry. Not receiving the comfort I was shooting for, I am forced to look elsewhere for vigor.

"Hey mom, I can follow the moon. No, the moon is following us. It's guarding us. Mom, it stopped, and it's waiting for us now."

SLAM! The corroded blue van sprinkles rust at the shutting of my mom's door. I prepare myself for exit into the dark world outside. I make sure to have my blankie, robustly heaving my chest out as the superhero sidekicks do on Saturday Morning cartoons I reach for the handle but my mom shakes her finger no. Through the window she looks into my eyes. Her eyes are always so red from the crying on Friday nights. I wonder why she is always so sad when my daddy works late. Now, mom bravely performs her fun of locking the door, checking the handle, locking again, and finally abandoning me. Before she reaches the door of the apartment, she yells at me to stay in the car. And I do.

I want to keep my mom safe from the dark. The crumbling-brick apartment is all vacant but for one wink of light on the third floor. Because of the droopy pine trees, the moon's light can only loom through its branches, and everything else whispers nothingness in its blackness.

"Hey dad! Daddy, what are you doing at this stranger's house?"

My dad's eyes were persistently blue. They were so blue as the sky in my dreams and as clear as the bathtub water before the bubbles were put in. He had always come home carrying his tools, strong, with his arms rippling just like Superman's. I admired his blond hair because it was just like a crown, and he would let me pull it when we were playing games. Now, though, everything was dark. All I could make of his face was his angry pout and yellow eyes. They weren't as clear or shiny of blue. They were saffron and mean. Yellow, they looked like the winking window on the third floor.

I bang on the windows, but my cry is not heard through their scream war.

"Daddy, stop it, don't make Mommy cry. No, she's been crying all night." I yell at the two. Their thick words continued to fill the air. These foreign phrases meant to cut like a knife left no room for my caring exhortation.

There is no swinging in the clear sky, but instead punches are being thrown in mid-air. My mom shakes her fists and points to the smoky windows on the third floor. Then, she motions toward the car. Both their flaming eyes meet mine. My face is like Gak slime stuck to the windshield when my dad runs over to open the door. With my blanket-free hand I reach for the button with the "Up" arrow on it, but I am stopped by the tiger eyes of my dad. Singing a scary song, my mom yells to me to stay in the car. I reach out to share my blankie with her. If only I could get to her, she could stop crying. Unaware of my aid, my mommy

is grabbing onto my dad and shaking her at me until my dad rips off the car mirror and I scream.

"I just want my mommy and daddy!"

All I am left to do is watch through the window's frame as my mom throws one of the scattered bottles at my dad. A lighter is next, and then another one of those shiny beer bottles. At each shatter I clasp my blankie tighter. The blankie, soft in my hands' touch, cannot stop the shaking of my body. At each yell, my eyes look up to the moon for warmth. BAM!

No, my daddy fell onto the car and then onto the ground. The car still shaking from his weight rocks me to comfort. Now, I am brave enough to move toward the window. My raining eyes can identify the blurred figures of my mom and dad wrestling on the ground for a wad of green paper bills.

"No! No, daddy! Stop playing rough with mommy. No, mommy, why do you have to leave daddy on the ground? Give him his play money back. Don't you know how to share? Oh, no, mommy hurry."

"Bob!" She yells, "I need this more than you. You left us, again you ignorant thug."

My dad didn't respond. He looks like he has the flu and tumbles to the ground, falling like that old tree in my grandma's yard. He almost squished my mommy as she ran toward the car.

"But wait, mommy, don't leave daddy there."

"Sarah, hurry, open the door, you have to open it now, hurry he's coming. Sarah, wipe your tears, the up button is right there."

"Mommy..."

I cry. My mommy rattles her keys until she is in the car. The night isn't ending the way my dream had planned it. Her horn beats a song to my dad instead of my dad singing me to sleep. There are dark clouds hovering over the bright moon instead of the blue sky and cotton-speckled beauty. He sways to the music and shakes his fists until he falls again. The images of my dad's yellow eyes piercing the dark and sinking below my sight burned itself into my mind's eye. All I do is hold my blankie and watch the moon as it follows my mommy and me back to our own apartment. The moon is just about the only thing I can see that is good in this night. Way up there, there is God shining down his silver rays of glory. I just wanna watch Mr. Rogers and say my good-night prayers.