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black and white

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black and white

— Mardelle Fortier

My father always kept the rules. He never cheated the phone company, never swiped books from libraries. A school superintendent, he warded off the disorders of plagiarism, smoking in bathrooms, hooky.

Dad let us attend only one movie in a given week. We went to hundreds of westerns, swashbucklers, cartoons, Disney films. Sometimes, on odd days, he tried other movies... like the afternoon he took me to see a story of somebody's life. I remember the popcorn, like crunchy rain falling into my sticky hands, eager rhythms of my eating, the darkened theater where anything could happen. So many hours I had sat there, in its soft technicolor web, spun from the endless candies of Disney's mind. I was used to magic, and to losing hold on fact.

But not today. "Eddie Duchin Story" was slow, grinding through close-ups of life, without the glittering strands of fantasy. I squirmed in my seat, aware of the theater, its gray walls, the man's elbow on my right. My dad, at my left, shifted as well. Shifted again. "Do you want to leave?" he asked.

Incredibly, we walked out. We marched up the dark aisle, out of the dusty hole of biography. Our legs were so large. I must have been eight.

My dad always remembered proudly, "We walked out of that movie."