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Fabrication to Freedom

As a young child, I resided “in an old house in Paris that was covered in vines” with eleven other rambunctious girls. When I was eleven, I accidentally stumbled upon the magical land of Narnia while venturing into an old wardrobe during an innocent game of hide and seek. Since then, I have unearthed numerous conspiracies and I have sailed the seven seas. I was taught the art of beekeeping by the Boatwright sisters, and I learned the significance of the overlooked pronoun “I”. At the end of a typical day, I would stand on my balcony and look out over the water to focus my gaze on a single, flashing green light at the end of a familiar dock. In the past couple of years, I have lived the life of a lonely traveling salesman, inhabited a small town where nothing remarkable ever takes place, witnessed both sides of European imperialism in Africa, and I have opened my drowsy eyelids to find myself transformed into a gigantic insect. In retrospect, my life has been anything but dull. However, I cannot claim these outrageous happenings as my own personal journey because in fact, they are not mine at all.

Since I can remember, my nose has been wedged between two pages and my eyes have adjusted to fine print. Whether it was a Dr. Seuss book, classic novel or a New York Times bestseller, I fully immersed myself in whatever type of literature I could get my hands on. Reading was never a chore or just another mundane class assignment; it was in my blood. The art of fiction transported me to a fantasy world that I could control. The local bookstore was my sweet shop; each aisle filled with hundreds of distinct dreams that I could fall into with just one turn of a page. Corresponding to this unreal sense, the song *Dream* by Priscilla Ahn conveys a childhood into adulthood transition that is prompted by a little girl's love of dreaming. The images, diction and themes incorporated to emphasize

the progression of the persona's life in the song mirror my own personal journey from a life of fabrication to one of authentic freedom. In the second and third lines of the song, the speaker describes her childhood playtime when she says, "...alone in my little world / who dreamed of a little home for me." The specific diction "alone" (l. 2) reveals her isolation from any human contact. The theme of seclusion is also incorporated through the repetition of the adjective "little" (ll. 2-4) to describe herself, her world and the home she dreams up for herself and herself only. In the same way, as a child I found myself constructing an imaginary land that consisted of my favorite novel settings. The concept of building a home in my mind that was everything I could want would lead me to delve deeper into my mind, shutting out reality and everyone in it. In line five, she sings "fed my house guests bark and leaves" as a part of her playing "pretend." She feeds her guests inedible substances revealing that they do not need actual nutrients to be sustained. Since her invisible friends exist only in her mind, and they are not in fact living, the girl can only give of herself without receiving anything in return. This concept correlates with my own puerile mentality as I would treat the characters I "met" in my books as my companions. My rationale in doing so was that our lunchtime "conversation" trumped one that I could be having with my vital friends. After describing her youth, the artist continues on to explain that she had a dream that she "could fly / from the highest swing" (ll. 8-9). The fact that she is able to soar from the tallest of swings indicates a sense of invincibility. Likewise, as long as I remained in the illusive realm, I could not be physically harmed, and if I disliked what I read I could simply close the book. From my naïve blue eyes, I believed that I could be completely satisfied in something entirely intangible, but I would soon find the truth to be the contrary.

In theory, there was nothing wrong with my love of the fictional world, but in reality, I loved the curiosities of these characters more than my own. It was not that I was some pitiful outcast, but my life was nothing out of the ordinary. Little did I know, that was all about to change. Similarly, in lines eleven and twelve of *Dream*, Ahn reflects on "long walks in the dark / through the woods grown behind the park"(ll.11-12). All of a sudden, the mood of the song takes a more serious, almost ominous, tone. The

“long walks” (l. 11) through the “woods” (l.12) symbolize a strenuous, drawn out journey through a place or time filled with fearful uncertainty. In contrast, the following lines depict an image of “stars” (l.14) smiling “down at” (l.14) her, as an illuminating guide through the darkness. I entered my dark forest when I came to the realization that real life was no longer playful or even prosaic, but rather it had become a trying struggle. In middle school and the beginning of high school my family was a broken, chaotic mess. From the outside, we appeared to have it all together. We were a well-off Christian family, but behind the façade was a group of divided people who were constantly consumed by the attitude of a workaholic and alcoholic father. In the midst of my pain, I turned to God for answers. The artist speaks of her asking God who she is “supposed to be”(l. 13) and that He “answered in silent reverie”(l. 15). The word choice “reverie” parallels with the motif of dreams because rather than God directly speaking to her, He shows her through the familiar dreamlike state that she has been enthralled with all along. Through my faith, I did not receive plainly dictated directions that I should take. Instead, my path of stars consisted of uncovering my purpose in life through the gifts I had been blessed with and the desires that were laid upon my heart.

Today, I can say that my days are no longer dominated by routine. If I want to get in my car and drive two hours to drink in the beauty of a waterfall, I will. Instead of keeping my music a secret, I play at local coffee shops for the sake of possibly being heard. After growing up in California, I find myself in the unfamiliar state of Georgia. Why, you may ask? Because it is an entirely new playground for me to conquer. I never want to get stuck in a rut of complacency and comfort. In the second chorus, the singer once again mentions her dream where she “could fly” (l. 18), but instead of a swing, her launching pad is “the highest tree” (l.19). This time, her starting point is not associated with childhood leisure, but rather thriving growth that is an even greater leap than her initial flight. I am at that same point in my own personal journey. Boundaries and fears do not hold me back. The beauty of releasing anxiety has become crucial in my walk with the Lord and living in the present tense. I am here, right at this moment, and that is exactly where I want to be.

With that said, I am quite the hypocrite. While I have realized the fragility of life and the importance of embracing a spontaneous lifestyle, my passion still remains in the imaginary realm. As I enter these next four years in hopes of expanding my knowledge, I have my future ambition in mind. In the song's final stanza, the woman concludes with describing her condition at the end of her life: "I lived it full, I lived it well / As many tales I lived to tell" (ll. 24-25). Her life experiences have become anecdotes that she has passed on to others. One day I will be writing screenplays or novels for other beings to get lost in, but instead of living through my creation, I will inspire my characters through my personal adventures.

Word Count: 1403

Dream by Priscilla Ahn Lyrics

1. I was a little girl
2. Alone in my little world
3. Who dreamed of a little home for me
4. I played pretend between the trees
5. And fed my house guests bark and leaves
6. And laughed in my pretty bed of green

7. I had a dream
8. That I could fly
9. From the highest swing
10. I had a dream

11. Long walks in the dark
12. Through woods grown behind the park
13. I asked God who I'm supposed to be
14. The stars smiled down at me
15. God answered in silent reverie
16. I said a prayer and fell asleep

17. I had a dream
18. That I could fly
19. From the highest tree
20. I had a dream

21. Now I'm old and feeling gray
22. I don't know what's left to say
23. About this life I'm willing to leave
24. I lived it full, I lived it well
25. As many tales I lived to tell
26. I'm ready now, I'm ready now
27. I'm ready now
28. To fly from the highest wing
29. I had a dream