How Can I Miss You When You Won't Go Away? [1]

February 9, 2015 Flash Nonfiction [2]

Flash Nonfiction by Stephen J. Brown

Winner of the 2014 Talking Writing Prize for Flash Nonfiction



Abstract:

You sacrificed everything for us, and we were never able to forgive you for it.

You gave up on us, and on life, too soon.

I think we could have been friends.

(function(i,s,o,g,r,a,m){i['GoogleAnalyticsObject']=r;i[r]=i[r]||function(){ (i[r].q=i[r].q||[]).push(arguments)},i[r].l=1*new Date();a=s.createElement(o), m=s.getElementsByTagName(o)[0];a.async=1;a.src=g;m.parentNode.insertBefore(a,m) })(window,document,'script','https://www.google-analytics.com/analytics.js','ga'); ga('create', 'UA-18260536-1', 'auto'); ga('send', 'pageview');

The rogue who was my dad had sired two children—the first, I suspect, to Save the Marriage, and the second—that would be me—a late-summer, alcohol-fueled Mistake. Dad moved out as I started school. It's reasonable to suppose that she still loved him, for a while. I saw her crying. Once.

She had no life but for us, the boys. She made that abundantly clear.

She did her best with us, and on most measures, it did the trick. We grew up. We clean our persons and our rooms. We vote in most elections. We value values.

She would have wanted to be remembered as a Tiger Mom. She made sure I went to school and did my homework and read actual books and could compete in Scrabble. But by eleventh grade, I was largely on my own, and she was more of a Capuchin Monkey Mom, off foraging for food in the daytime, throwing nasty barbs at night to try to keep me home. And after my older brother fled, as I lurched uncertainly into independence, she evolved into more of a Snapping Turtle Mom, scary until confronted, then slinking slowly away.

She said my first wife wasn't good enough—for me and thus for her. Then she said my second wife was too good for everyone. The third and last wife almost fixed it all, but she arrived too late. Mom liked her grandkids well enough, although way down she probably wondered, after all that she'd been through, why I'd ever thought to have them.

We drifted more and more apart.

And then, one day, Mom slinked away for good, to southern California, where Grey Panthers go to fight and then to die.

She would *show us.*

She proved we didn't love her.

Postscript:

Hey, Mom, can we talk?

Your grandkids are grown-ups now. I sacrificed practically nothing for them, for which I hope they'll one day forgive me. You have two great-grandchildren, and more are likely on the way. I'm 69, as grown up as I'm ever going to be, and I think I may be ready to get to know you.

I think we could be friends.

Art Information

- "She Captured My Heart [3]" © Walt Stoneburner; Creative Commons license.

(function(i,s,o,g,r,a,m){i['GoogleAnalyticsObject']=r;i[r]=i[r]||function(){ (i[r].q=i[r].q||[]).push(arguments)},i[r].l=1*new Date();a=s.createElement(o), m=s.getElementsByTagName(o)[0];a.async=1;a.src=g;m.parentNode.insertBefore(a,m) })(window,document,'script','https://www.google-analytics.com/analytics.js','ga'); ga('create', 'UA-18260536-1', 'auto'); ga('send', 'pageview');

Stephen J. Brown is a retired technology consultant and college administrator. After telling stories for fifty years, he’s finally getting around to writing some of them down.

Why is this flash piece nonfiction?

"Because I learned long ago that making stuff up could get me into big trouble," Stephen writes.

Source URL: https://mail.talkingwriting.com/how-can-i-miss-you-when-you-won%E2%80%99t-go-away

Links:
[1] https://mail.talkingwriting.com/how-can-i-miss-you-when-you-won%E2%80%99t-go-away
[2] https://mail.talkingwriting.com/tw-channels-and-categories/flash-nonfiction
[3] https://www.flickr.com/photos/waltstoneburner/6888831884/in/photolist-buK4Hw-mfuy6M-d2nBes-7hAh1L-p4wcHX-7nDA2u-89ochG-5nobFq-82bfdG-qtuxnv-8EPMNE-34qW6p-eUVdbF-p4ycgw-ogwGoD-ogwGxC-7k7BVn-ncwYtt-bwCC8E-93LnjJ-8EHFXH-6XcndE-6nFjJH-6oKX19-kkJS4m-3XaaxP-dzhTDm-6HnG1c-8qM1uu-4rfAbV-5sxdxJ-3Xa9JP-8wdoob-6BtfhJ-6Bp6wk-6BteS7-6BtgqA-6Bp4FX-5uu76R-dvnhPX-49iffG-i8okLs-mfkoVc-cUFNoS-9zrq2A-qr6rdm-6ygByY-qjVAGa-e7dN2E-8YwvcS

(function(i,s,o,g,r,a,m){i['GoogleAnalyticsObject']=r;i[r]=i[r]||function(){ (i[r].q=i[r].q||[]).push(arguments)},i[r].l=1*new Date();a=s.createElement(o), m=s.getElementsByTagName(o)[0];a.async=1;a.src=g;m.parentNode.insertBefore(a,m) })(window,document,'script','https://www.google-analytics.com/analytics.js','ga'); ga('create', 'UA-18260536-1', 'auto'); ga('send', 'pageview');