

A Last Look

2/10/22

The credits continued to scroll up the giant screen and still she would not look away. Spell bound – is that the word... words?

“Let’s go,” her father prodded.

“C’mon,” Jimmy whined as he pulled on her sleeve. “It’s so over.” But she did not budge, squinting more intently.

“We can talk about it in the car,” her mother accommodated while smiling at her husband, caught between their moods.

“Don’t!” she yelled at her brother in reaction to his jerking her arm.

“It’s over, Honey,” her mother appended. “That’s where this movie ends.”

“It can’t end there; we don’t know what happens next.”

“Lilly, it’s make-believe. *Nothing*,” her father emphasized, “happened at all.” He paused glancing at his wife. “It’s just a story and nothing *else* will happen either. It’s over. That’s all they wrote. You can make up whatever you want to happen next; they’re not going to do it for you.”

“No,” she insisted defiantly as the logos of the film makers scrolled up and disappeared leaving the screen dark. The lights in the theater were on brightly now. She started to rise, still looking back at the large screen angrily. “Why do they do that? Why make a movie without a proper end? It’s not fair.”

Her father sighed shaking his head. “Why does she always do that?” He asked rhetorically.

Her mother chuckled.

“She’s just a brat,” Jimmy summarized.

It came back to her now like words scrolling up a screen, that same screen from so long ago, but spoken words, her own words in her childhood voice, Jimmy’s voice from before it had forever been silenced, her mother’s. “They’re not going to do it for you,” was in her father’s voice, his strong voice from back then, unrecognizably different than the last words she had heard him speak as mere whispers. Now this.

Looking down at the version of her father the undertaker had presented as though it were the proper end of a real person, her father, she noticed for the first time that his nostrils were not mirror images of each other, one was longer and narrower than the other. Had it always been that way? The little hair he had left was parted and slicked back unlike any way she had ever seen it. His fingers were entwined over the suitcoat and tie, none of which had ever occurred before; she could not remember his hands ever having been together in any kind of grip – they were always open and apart. Still, the words she remembered were his. “You can make up whatever you want to happen next; they won’t do it for you.” Her first tears emerged; her throat was tight.

“Let’s go Mommy, everybody’d gone.” Jimmy jerked her sleeve. Henry’s arm was around her now, also urging her to leave. Still she stood a moment longer, a last look.