

Confessional Media Map 1

Backyard

There was once a swing set here.
And I loved to swing,
But the whole set tipped out of the grass
when you swung too high;
so my Dad took it out.
Later my brother built an igloo there,
with a long snow tunnel. It was too cold
to stay inside but our dog, Tana,
loved to scuttle to the top
and look out over her kingdom.

We lived under this tree
when we were pirates.

I hung a heart-shaped necklace
hooked on the corner
of the tall, wooden fence.
It was an offering to the sky
for a romantic life.
The next day I went outside
and it was gone.

Whenever our neighbor Vic would mow his lawn,
my dog Helga would bark at him.
We had Thanksgiving dinners with his family every year
back then and he would say,
"I don't know why that dog doesn't like me."

Years later he stopped mowing and came over to the fence.
She wagged her tail and so he gave her some pets.
That's all she wanted.

There was once a turntable on this bookshelf. For Christmas
one year I bought my dad the Alicia Bridges single, "I Love the
Nightlife."

He loved it and played it over and over again. His mother said
he did that as a kid with that gory Tex Ritter record "Blood on
the Saddle." She said it drove them nuts.

I realized I did that too, played a song over and over again.

...my mother would have
to say, "Everybody be
quiet; Mary wants to
say something." And
then what I said would
always sound dumb.

Christmas presents were hidden here
but I never looked.

By high school, I finally inherited
an old stereo with a cassette deck,
my grandmother's old color TV
and, (I was spoiled), a new VCR.
Paul, Lisa and I would stay up all night
watching MTV. They liked The Cure,
Howard Jones and the Thompson Twins.
Whenever I hit record, the VCR
would make a slow, wheezing sound
for 5 whole seconds and we always missed
the beginning of our favorite videos.
It doesn't seem like much now,
but it was pretty upsetting then.

I had a *People Magazine* subscription.
One day the issue came when Karen Carpenter died.
I threw it in the closet and wouldn't look at it for years.

I wrote poems
under this window
because there was a heat vent
there

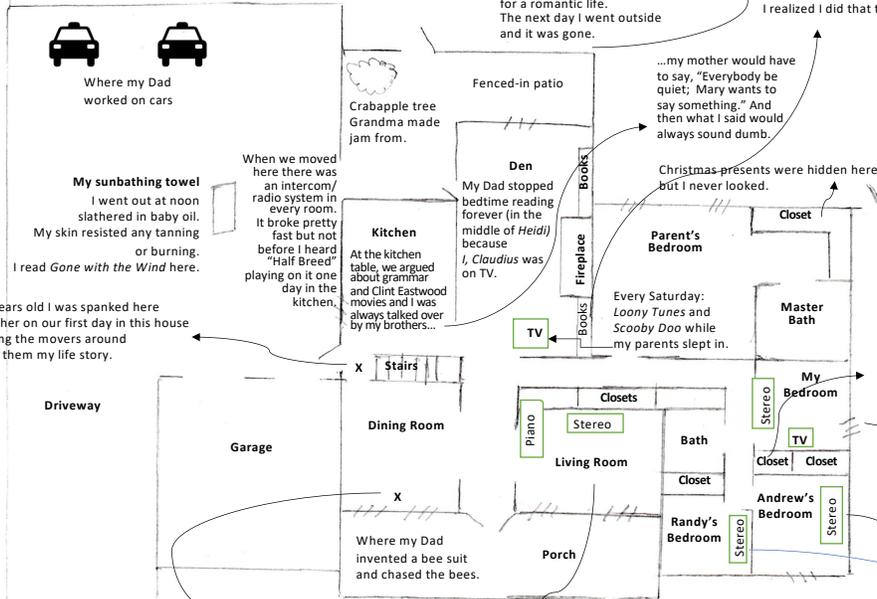
When I was 8, I came to this room to read
my brother's Mad Magazines.
Later in the mid-80s, when the stereo came,
I made mix tapes here for aerobics.
I remember listening to Barry Manilow's
If I Should Love Again and Olivia Newton John.
It was also where I discovered
my brother's three Babys albums
in a stack by the door.

Andrew's room was decorated with model airplanes.
Randy had a poster of Jennifer Beals from *Flashdance*.
My mom nixed the Farrah Fawcett poster as "too risqué."
When I was 8, Randy gave me a crash course on the Beatles here.
This was for a show-and-tell for music class
at my new school. I don't think I fooled anybody
but Randy was happy for two minutes that I wasn't listening
to Beatles covers sung by Sonny & Cher.

In 1979, when my older cousin Erin came to visit
we bounced up and down on Randy's trundle bed
whenever Rupert Holmes, Cliff Richard or Blondie
came on his stereo radio.

When my brothers left for college, this stereo moved
from Randy's room to Andrew's room for some reason.
It had a turntable and a slot for 8-Tracks.
They left all their records behind
but the 8-tracks were gone by then.

Front Yard



At seven years old I was spanked here
by my mother on our first day in this house
for following the movers around
and telling them my life story.

My sunbathing towel
I went out at noon
slathered in baby oil.
My skin resisted any tanning
or burning.
I read *Gone with the Wind* here.

When we moved
here there was
an intercom/
radio system in
every room.
It broke pretty
fast but not
before I heard
"Half Breed"
playing on it one
day in the
kitchen.

At the kitchen
table, we argued
about grammar
and Clint Eastwood
movies and I was
always talked over
by my brothers...

My Dad stopped
bedtime reading
forever (in the
middle of *Heidi*)
because
I, Claudius was
on TV.

Crabapple tree
Grandma made
jam from.

Where my Dad
worked on cars

Key

You might not think this is a poem.
And maybe you're right.
In fact, it wanted to be an essay.

I had to fight to keep it small.

The floorplan was recreated
with the assistance of my Dad
who fixed up the basement;
so he remembers
where the walls
were.

There was once a dying bird here, hit by a car.
It would freak out whenever a car drove near it.
I called my grandmother on the phone,
but she said there was nothing I could do.
So I used the mail to pick it up and move it to the grass.
It died right after that. I wrote a poem about it.

While I was doing a particularly dramatic rendition
of Cher's "Love and Pain" (1979), one of my brothers
hid behind the upright piano and grabbed my legs.

Our dog Tana broke out these windows
trying to protect me from an insurance salesman.
We were home alone and I was in the basement
dancing to The Pointer Sisters on the radio.

I spent most of my childhood, age seven to eleven,
in the "Living Room" with the large phonograph there,
a piece of furniture with a broken lid. After diner,
I would listen to records in the dark, with only
the outside street-lamp lighting the room:
Sonny & Cher and whatever was in the abandoned
stacks my parents had no time for,
like that Paul Mauriat album with the naked,
painted lady, Neil Diamond, Johnny Cash,
all the Disney and Marlo Thomas albums we had.
Later I brought home Barry Manilow records
from the library. I acted out all the songs
except for the love songs which were emoted
from the piano bench and a broken jump rope handle.

Where my Dad
invented a bee suit
and chased the bees.