The Little Things

Sure, I remember some things.

One time, I remember when I was a kid, my parents took me to Disneyland. The lines were so long that they decided to leave me waiting to go have lunch and a drink, and by the time they came back I was still waiting in the line. I think I was in line for Pirates, that pirate one.

Was it worth it? The ride, you mean? Probably not. What is, really, when you’re sitting there for three hours for a four-minute thing? People always say that the wait makes the experience sweeter, but I think they’re lying. No, I know they’re lying. To be honest, I don’t remember the ride at all, only the wait. There was this guy behind me with his girlfriend, and they made out and giggled a little bit. They did that for the entire wait, and it got really annoying. I really wanted to say something, but what do you really say to that? “Stop being so happy, please. It’s annoying me.” I mean, really?

I was in that line for three hours, and then I got in another line for three hours, and then I got in a third one for two hours when we had to go. And that last one? I didn’t even get to the ride. I think I was about an hour and a half out still when my parents took me home. The two rides I went on were the pirate one and the space one. No, the roller coaster one. In that line, I had a kid in front of me; trying to impress his friends, I guess. He’d make sarcastic remarks about the décor and they’d give him a laugh, trying to make him feel better. He had a whole routine planned out. Oh God, I remember something he said, I know I do. Can’t I remember…oh, yeah. He said something like how the spacemen had to pee in their suits, so they were basically worse than infants. Infants can’t control where they go, but a spaceman goes willingly in his pants. Basically stick a baby in a tin can and send it up to space, have some folks on ground control, and it’d be pretty much the same experience for everyone involved. He got a sad, wispy chuckle from a kid in a yellow shirt, but nothing else. He moved on after that to a different joke, but that was something.

Yeah, OK. I also remember waiting in class for my test scores. I was always happy that they didn’t read them out loud, like I heard of them doing at some high-achievement schools. I felt really scared, like I was going to throw up. For some reason, I thought that the teachers would take me outside of the class, after the class, and give me a good spanking or something, just to motivate me. I think I was pretty average as students go, maybe a bit on the slow side. I never had to go to the discipline office, that’s something, isn’t it? I’d remember the wait, if I had.

I remember waiting in line at the supermarket, holding my cereal and my milk and my apples. I still get kids cereal; I guess I have a sweet tooth like that. I looked at the nutritional facts once for Cocoa Puffs. Terrible. That cereal, it turns the milk all chocolaty and you can get chocolate milk without having to buy that syrup, so it’s a good bargain. I’ve sat in that food line for, cumulatively, like 5 months or something, probably. I wouldn’t be surprised if it was more; let’s say a full year’s worth. I’ve spent a full year of my life waiting to buy food, food that will sustain me so that I can go back to waiting again. And I couldn’t tell you a single meal that I’ve had in the past four years. What does that say, then? Breakfast, lunch, or dinner. I only know I like that kid’s cereal because I keep buying it, so there’s that for you.

OK, yeah, there go the waterworks. They just pop up and go back every now and then, don’t pay them any mind. They never seem to have a correlation to what I’m talking about or thinking about, I don’t think. Let me have a moment.

Great, my eyes are cleared, and I’m ready to move on.

First off, my mother is dead. I go to her grave, every now and then, and just sit around. That way, I can remember everything. I remember once, when I was sitting there, somebody walked up all dressed in black and laid a bouquet of flowers on her grave. The interesting thing is, when I do go, I try to convince myself that I didn’t come to the graveyard to visit her. I tell myself over and over again that I am waiting for my father to come visit, and that I’ll recognize him as soon as he walks in. Then I would plan out everything we would do together afterwards. It wasn’t anything in and of itself but a long, extended wait, me being in that graveyard. So I distanced myself from the grave, and only looked over every now and then to get a general sense of what was going on over there. That’s when I saw that fellow. I wasn’t sitting anywhere near it, so it didn’t look as though anybody was there. That’s probably why he walked up. There’s a funny sort of privacy rule to a graveyard visit, isn’t there? If somebody else is there mourning your person, you just hang back or leave. That seems a bit selfish, if you ask me. I’m not sure if this fellow would have hung back if I’d been sitting right at the bench in front of the grave, but I hope not. I like to think not. I like to think that she and him had had a serious bond, something that would overcome awkwardness and etiquette, and that he would have politely walked up next to me, dropped the flowers, and left. Maybe even sat down and chatted a little. Anyways, from my little perch, I saw him lay the flowers down, have a little bit of a stand, and leave.

No, I know he wasn’t my father. If he was, I probably wouldn’t be here now. I’d be with him, doing stuff that I’d forget about a day after. I’ll bet it’s fun in the moment, though. That’s mainly the thought that keeps me going, that I’m having fun when things happen.

This guy caught my eye because he looked as though he was lost. This is nothing new; in graveyards, people become tentative and uncertain. But he was special, because he gave off a vibe that said; I don’t belong here. I don’t know exactly what I’m doing here, but I brought some flowers, so I’ll go ahead and put them here. It might have been his saunter, or his head swiveling around like a periscope. He scouted out his moves, then he made it to the grave, deposited the flowers, and made a beeline out. I don’t remember the funeral, so I don’t know if I knew him. Maybe he’s an uncle. I don’t know. I really don’t.

I do remember sitting in the waiting room outside of her hospital room. There was a men’s fitness magazine that I flipped through, and I looked at the clock every now and then. The guys in there were really good-looking, I remember thinking that. There was something about how working out can make your teeth healthier, some fluff piece. At some point they must have called me in to have a chat with her. She probably said something to me. They’re called “Famous Last Words” for a reason, I suppose, but for the life of me, I don’t know what they were. I’ll bet they were something trite, like “I love you” or “I’m proud of you”. I like to think she could conjure up something a bit more personal than that, but if she had, I probably wouldn’t have gotten her reference anyways.

No, I can’t remember anybody else being in there. I feel like that should be a given, that I don’t remember that.

No, I can’t remember even a single thing that he did with me. Like, in Disneyland, I remember the two of them, as a sort of parental unit, but as an individual? Nope. The only reason I remember her is because one time we waited on the side of the road after our car broke down. We talked about my favorite brand of cereal, which is of course Cocoa Puffs. We talked about frogs. We talked about a dozen other meaningless things, all of which I remember in pristine detail, and I do also remember that she seemed a little bit bored, distracted. Probably worried about the fee. She tried to keep me entertained, though. Not too well, luckily for me. We were just waiting for AAA, nothing special. I don’t even remember ever hearing that she loved me, but she probably did. But everything he and I did together was special. I remember waiting outside of his garage for him to be done with work so we could go out and do something fun, play catch or something. It was really greasy. But I liked it, absently. But any specific thing? No, nothing. Everything we did, he imbued with purpose, so, you know. So there you go.

Excuse me.

OK, fine. Listen, if you ever want to talk again, maybe just to kill some time, then come around. We could talk about some banalities like the weather or sports or something. Let’s not schedule anything. Just find me and we can talk. Only, remind me of your name again, one more time, when we meet, okay?