

My Childhood Told Me 'I am the movie'

Victor Wang

The Ford Falcon pulled up with a groan and cough. It sprayed bits of gravel in its wake and the tiny projectiles flaked with black dust hit me in the shins. I raised my head and saw my dad's well practised 'I'm so sorry I'm late' eyes and apologetic smile. I frowned and climbed in the back seat.

He smiled at me through the mirror and winked. An icecream cone was delivered to me in reverent recompense; I accepted with a sort of feigned ambivalence and gave it a reconciliatory lick.

'Sorry I'm late, mate. Things just got hectic at the office.'

I nodded half-heartedly with a shrug and a flat grin. Then the car braked sharply and the icecream accelerated forwards, splattering and smearing itself over everything it touched. Vanilla filled every scent and sensor and we laughed; misgivings forgotten in the sort of pure happiness that comes only with the flickering candle of childhood, its scent wafting slowly through a room before disappearing as if it were never even there.

A few years later, my brother got the Falcon. He used it to satisfy his teenage proclivities and I watched him come home every night with his silhouette stark in the buzzing amber of the hallway lights. But it was his skin that I was mesmerised by and the most difficult to keep my eyes from: it was flecked and

specked with tiny shadows, immiscibly soft and rough at the same time, like sifting sand through suede and it seemed, stretched so tightly across his bones and muscle, as though it would never give to a push from my hand.

But he ignored me, mostly. I felt as though he was some magician, not a street performer with acrobatics and fire-breathing or the bold hysterics and physicality of a master illusionist, but real magic, sublimated to a MBA and one day he'll tear off his tiresome suburban persona, jump off into the skies and fly away to some glamorous lifestyle of sipping decaffeinated espressos and directing business mergers. He was the 21st century Superman everyone wanted and deserved. My unrealistic expectations and desires were peeled, stripped from every layer and facet to reveal the truth of growing up, which I could never accept but had to anyway.

We carved our names on the side doors, a permanent marker of our childhood, and swore, like Sawyer and Finn, to never forget and sealed it and made it law with our saliva. Our childhood dreams and promises were bigger than the universe, inflated and engorged like water droplets inside a helium balloon, floating higher than the tallest skyscrapers and spreading explosively apart. We never thought, sitting on the coarse carpet of the Falcon, that one day the fuselage would give, the balloon would pop and we'd walk away as fundamentally different people.

But he took me on a ride in the Falcon on my 16th birthday. He told me he had a great job in the city, as an investment banker for a Fortune 500 company, and I listened with a well-rehearsed inanimate enthusiasm. I left imprints on the glass with every breath, tin crystallisations of clouds that slowly drifted apart and dissipated into tiny drops of moisture slowly moving down the glass. But the cold air took my breath away and the car's brakes tripped and sent us in a tailspin, seething and screeching over the macadam like a knife on plastic vinyl, scraping off the marks we once made.

The Falcon truncated a deep trench between the road and river. It was exposed, naked, with its hidden gems excavated and plundered, and the water forced itself through every membrane and opening, washing away the scars of my existence. It left salty trails as it slid into the river, where it sank with a groan and a sigh. We walked away unscathed.

My brother handed me the keys to the Falcon in the morning. He told me that it was only right that I should have them. He must have said goodbye because the next thing I remember was his black Audi pulling away quietly, trailing tiny particles of dust hanging in suspension.

I could see it. A hive of bubble gum coalesced on the ceiling, left to mature for 10 years. A mark on the ground from displaced icecream cones and initials carved deep into the walls. I closed my eyes, felt the finality of the keys in my hand, still warm, and the rapidly congealing stains of my life depressing and darkening the leather upholstery, leaking its tannins through the murky waters deep beneath the waves of sunlight and consciousness. I saw it as a cartoon, a caricature soaked and forgotten in a rectangular glass of perspiring water and dissolved Valium besides the fraying ends of everyone's midlife crisis, hung like pop art, as I dreamed silently of becoming bigger than the house, the neighbourhood, everything.



Victor Wang wrote this in 2012 when he was in Year 12 at Fort Street High School in New South Wales.