

July 4th at Five

The first time I was five years old at outdoor fireworks, I was frightened. After hearing the froth from the flame, there was no reward for my anticipation of where the next flash would be. My eyes face to the left with the sound, and the solid burst is above and to the right. In my sight is blackness with shards of color falling off to the sides. I stretch with a foothold on my Mother's hip to catch a cluster of green or red. The reach too, grabs at blackness. In the few minutes that are hours in kid time, with every repetition, my senses and gestures shrink back into the fold of my Mother's shoulder.

I'm taken back to the car as a cozy getaway. Picnic blankets that still smell like sun are padded around me. A few cracker crumbs shake down and lightly scratch my arm. There is a small bear named Theodore somewhere under this rumbled fort. The car door is shut. My cave is half safe and half lonely as the grown ups return to where the older kids have been.

I cannot see the night through the glass. Silent blasts of color are at the reflection of every window. The brightness and color are generous to me. I watch glitter falls drip down to my left, my right, before me and from behind. The windows are screens. Another silent movie memory to add to the truth of my childhood.

Stepping on Theodore's head I struggle to roll one window down, just enough. The sound of the crackling reaches in and is a joyous one. This smaller, finer, scatter of noise becomes my marching band. I stand with my blanket cape and conduct a snap and pop soundscape for the full flowers of bright red light in the mirrors.

My cape almost gets caught in the hinge of the car door when I open it, just enough. It is cooler and my bare feet step down into damp grass. My hand stays on the handle until the first time a full out 'BOOM' rattles the car. My hand stays on the handle until the second full out 'BOOM' rattles the car. When the third 'BOOM' rattles the car I lift my conductor's baton in glorious expectation of the next thunder from wherever it may come from and with whatever it may show.

The second time I was five years old at outdoor fireworks I was standing on the roof of the car. I stood in the center - just far enough in from each edge that not a single hand could reach me and return me to before.