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A Trip to Blockbuster Turns Into a Poem

PHILIP FULLMAN

I wish I was creative.
Like I was as a kid.
When I was a kid,
I had a great imagination.
I could create anything.
Like a small god
whose powers were limited
to wearing costumes
and playing with dolls.

Today they are Action Figures;
back then they were dolls
*With movable parts
to let you pose them
in ready for action positions
Each 8 in. with an authentic costume.*
According to the ad.

I had one,
sometimes two of each
Superman—Batman and Robin
Green Arrow—Supergirl—Batgirl
Wonder Woman—
both the 8 in and the later 12 in.
based on Lynda Carter—
Shazam—Aquaman—Joker
Penguin—Riddler and Catwoman
Spock
(I wanted Captain Kirk,
but Woolworths was out)
Spider-Man—Hulk—Iron Man—
Two of the Fantastic Four—
Falcon—Green Goblin
and Fonzie.

I had the Batcave
but never did get the Hall of Justice.
I did however, have a nice-sized box
my dad made up to be the Hall of Justice.

There was G.I. Joe
12 in. tall
life-like hair and beard,
scar on his cheek.
He would say something like
*Take cover
Run like hell
or Oh shit!*
When you pulled the string on his back.

Even had the 11 in.
Colonel Steve Austin
Astronaut
a man barely alive
with Bionic Eye—
which was a hole in the back of his head
with a small magnifying glass—
Bionic Arm
with a rubber skin sleeve over it.
You rolled it up to work on his arm
after he wore it out lifting
the plastic engine block he came with.
If you wanted to change him
out of his red sweat suit and sneakers
you had to buy his leisure suit separately.
Same with the Bionic Woman.
Fortunately Colonel Austin
and Ken wore the same size clothes.

m



ME BRANDON SPARKS

My mother
decided that with all the fighting I had going on,
someone would need a doctor-
Dr. Ken and Nurse Barbie.
Ken never did do much.
Barbie was always in some type of danger:
kidnapped
dangled from over the ledge of the kitchen counter
spending time under G.I. Joe.

I didn't know anything about sex
other than there was kissing
and you were probably naked.
I figured a lot of that out when mom
got the new Charlie Rich album
and played "Behind Closed Doors"
over and over.

Joe and Barbie did it in front of the couch
in the den,
the couch being a mountain in the woods.

The living room was usually the desert
with the sofa a mountain
and the boomerang coffee table a ledge.
I had zip lines everywhere
from the Green Stamp bookshelf to the end table
and from the piano/
heliport/bad guys' hideout
to the other end table.

My toy room—
that is a converted garage to hold toys
for a child with no siblings in the house—
Had string hanging from the ceiling
so Batman and Robin could swing
from one end of the room to the other as the story dictated.

I would spend hours coming up with a storyline
plotting out movements
and directing the action.
All the figures in their places.

Then I would begin playing
acting out the story
just as I created it in my head.

Fonzie and Barbie were out doing something-
nothing that involved them being naked.
—Barbie was 11 in. Fonzi only 8 in.
G.I. Joe was 12 in. and could whip The Fonz's ass.
While out they stumble on The Joker and Green Goblin
robbing a bank.
They try to get word to the Hall of Justice
but the Riddler knocks them out before they can.
They're taken to the piano
where Penguin is waiting.
There he reveals his plan:
what they're going to do with the money
and they're never going to escape
because the Super Heroes don't know where they are.

Two of the Fantastic Four and Green Arrow
go to look for them, as they should have been back
with lunch hours ago.

They take G.I Joe's jeep from the toy room,
stopping in the den to see if Colonel Austin has seen them,
which he hasn't but runs at Bionic speed to the kitchen
to look for them.

Two of the Four and Arrow proceed to the living room
where they are spotted by Riddler from the top of the piano
and shot at by a missile.

It narrowly misses.

Before the radio goes out the Invisible Woman
is able to let Spock know their location.
It went on like this until justice prevailed.

I would spend more time setting up,
trying to come up with scenarios
and making zips lines
than I would actually playing.

Just like a movie:
six months work
for an hour and a half film.



CUBIST BOY BRANDON SPARKS



I AM WHO I AM THOMAS ISAAC

I mostly played alone;
 The other kids wouldn't play right.
 Their idea of a fight was to bang
 Spider-Man and the Penguin together 20 times
 say "ouch" a few times, and Spider-Man is victorious.
 This drove me insane.
 Spider-Man is much stronger than Penguin.
 and faster.
 He would just have to cover him in a web
 courtesy of mom's hair net,
 and the fight's over.
 If there was a fist fight,
 I would choreograph the punches and kicks,
 with the good guys always victorious,
 unless one of the bad guys cheated
 or sucker punched them.

Rob was the kid who lived across the street.
 I played with him more than any other kids,
 thereby making him my best friend.
 Rob understood Super Heroes.
 He knew Batman didn't have super powers
 and played accordingly.
 Even so,
 after playing with him for about an hour
 I was ready for him to go home
 and be by myself.

I wasn't playing with my Super Heroes
 or G.I. Joes as much when I turned eight.
 Once I saw *Star Wars*.
 These weren't the same dolls I grew up with.
 These were 3 in. plastic figures
 with clothes painted on
 and no bendable joints.
 The arms moved only at the shoulder
 and the legs at the hip-
 perfect for goose stepping.

Eventually, they made some 11 in. figures
 with actual costumes.

It was soon after that Luke Skywalker
 first met G.I. Joe and Hulk.

I would make up the same type of stories
 and imaginary danger for my action figures
 as I had for my dolls.

At three inches it's easier to lose them when
 they're hiding from a scout team in the sofa.

For the past three years

I had been making up my own *Star Wars* stories,
 Creating my own version of what happened
 at the end of the first film.

It was 1980:

the *Empire Strikes Back* was coming out
 and I couldn't wait.

Mom was watching the 700 Club,
 like she did every day,

waiting on her word of knowledge from Pat.

Before he could speak a word
 to the bitter old woman with a bad hip
 who alienated her kids and
 smoked a pack and a half
 of Tarrington 100's a day,
 Pat had a guest.

This guest said Darth Vader was Satan
 and Yoda a demon,
 and if you really loved Jesus
 and your children,
 you wouldn't take them to see *Empire*.
 Not only that, you would get rid of anything
 in your house related to *Star Wars*.

I don't know how many action figures
 the Millennium Falcon
 an X-Wing fighter
 a Tie Fighter

Land Speeder
 Posters—Sheets
 Burger King collectable glasses
 a board game—cards—
 All gone
 Sold to my brother's
 wife's
 sister-in-law's
 adopted son
 for \$50.
 Jesus just wanted them out of the house.
 He didn't care if you sold them to heathens
 to recoup some of your investment.

Soon after, my mom recalled
 Adam West as Batman
 going into a trance
 and Superman hypnotizing someone—
 Both of which are Satanic activities
 if you read your Bible and
 squint hard enough.
 No one wanted to buy Superman
 or Spider-Man or G.I. Joe,
 so they ended up in a garbage bag.
 Four actually.
 How G.I. Joe ended up in there I don't know;
 all he did was defend his country.
 Perhaps because once I learned more about sex
 he and Barbie started hooking up more often.
 The wages of sin.

After that
 I started watching a lot more television.
 I almost never read
 Before I read comic books,
 but they'd all been thrown out.
 So I just sat in front of the TV.
 No thinking.
 No creating.
 I just watched.

Occasionally I'd wonder if Kimberly Drummond
 would go out with me,
 or how Valerie Bertinelli and that other girl
 could be sisters when they looked nothing alike.
 Then I got an Atari 2600
 and there went the rest of my imagination.

I think it was Cinco De Mayo 1999-
 Maybe it was just the weekend.
 A bunch of friends were going out
 but I was strapped for cash.
 I think Step One is admitting you have a problem;
 Pawning your TV, VCR and Super Nintendo
 for beer money
 may qualify under number one.
 I never could afford to get my stuff out of hock,
 So with nothing else to do in my apartment
 I picked up a book,
 One of the ones I said I'd read but never did.
 After a while you don't miss TV.

Now I see these crappy movies at the video store
 and wonder how they ever got made.
 Who thought that sounded like a good idea?
 And wish I was still that creative,
 That I had an idea for a movie.
 Something where Superman—
 Batman and Robin—Wonder Woman
 Green Arrow—Supergirl—Batgirl
 Spider-Man—Two of the Fantastic Four
 Iron Man—Falcon—Hulk and the Fonz
 take on Joker-Penguin-Riddler and Catwoman.
 They enlist the help of G.I. Joe and his
 Adventure Team.
 But not the Lone Ranger and Tonto.
 That would be silly.