

Radio Memory / Brandon LaBelle

Script 1 – monologue (to a friend):

I used to wake up at 7:50 every day for school. My mother would be up before me, fixing breakfast for my dad. I never saw my dad in the mornings though, as he would be on his way to work before I came down the stairs washed and dressed for the day at around 8:15. I would take my place at the table, and my mother would set a plate of eggs, toast and sausage before me. Sometimes she'd make porridge, other days pancakes, but usually and most generally, eggs. I never thought about it until much later, but I was never sure if she also ate breakfast after I left the house at 8:30 to catch the bus for school, or if she somehow waited until lunch. To this day, I still don't really know. But certainly, she was a good cook and seemed to enjoy preparing meals for her family, that is, for dad and me. I remember her blue and green apron, with the flower in the middle that seemed to never get dirty – that apron was always as clean as the bathroom tub, which my mother scrubbed daily. I don't know how she did it, with all that cooking, to keep the apron spotless – my mother was always incredibly refined and smooth in her movements. That is one of the things that made growing up such a pleasant experience, that my mother remained always her smooth and careful self. I used to spend hours in my room, or on the living room floor, playing with my toy cars, or drawing in my coloring books, with the sound of the radio playing in the background, mostly in the kitchen where my mother had a small portable radio always tuned to the BBC. I could hear it in the living room, more as a light humming sound, or a drifting sound that at times would make my ears twitch with some important news, or most usually, would fall all around me like snowflakes. I

had this box full of building blocks – not the large, colorful kind, but wooden logs and sticks, that you could use to build small structures, such as forts, houses, or even a neighborhood, with streets. This could keep me busy for a whole afternoon, imagining and constructing situations. But this was usually on the weekends. During the week I did not come back from school until late in the afternoon, after going to football practice or attending the school dancing lessons, something which I dreaded but which my mother thought essential to my upbringing. She was old-fashioned in many ways, my mother, with her cooking and apron and books on etiquette that remained on the living room bookshelves even though no one ever looked at these. The week was a soft rhythm of waking up, breakfasts, bus rides, classes and other activities, and evenings at home, with dad reading his paper, mother knitting or playing cards with her friend, Beatrice, who lived next door. And me watching TV, or organizing my collection of marbles. Dad sometimes played marbles with me, if he wasn't too drunk from his nights at the pub, or too tired from work. We'd set up a small area on the living room floor, using string and sometimes my set of building blocks to create an arena for the marble toss. Flicking marbles so as to bump your opponent's pieces out, whoever was left with the most marbles inside the ring at the end, won. And usually this meant dad accusing me of cheating, or him having taken most of my pieces and hiding them in his fist, and me chasing him through the house, up the stairs and into his room, until we landed on the bed laughing and wrestling.

One morning I woke up as usual, at 7:50, with my captain avengers alarm clock beeping, and made my way to the shower, got dressed as usual, and went downstairs for breakfast.

Dad's empty plate was still on the table, and mother had her apron on, her hair twisted into a knot and held back with a pair of colorful pins. We usually didn't say too much. I would eat quickly, in a couple of bites and chews, with sips of juice in between, and then grab my pack and make my way to the door, ready to race to catch the bus. On this day though, something different happened. I mean, I can't say for sure why it happened this way, but there is no doubt that this day marked a turning point, something unforgettable and something I'm still carrying around with me. As usual, I ate my breakfast and grabbed my pack and quickly made my way to the front door, shouting goodbye to my mother. When I got to the living room though, I paused to grab a couple of marbles I saw on the floor, left there from the games of the night before. Placing them in my pack, I looked up and thought I saw something through the front window, a flash of sorts or something that caught my eye. But it was nothing. At that moment, the radio was playing from the kitchen, as it usually did, yet I heard something I had never heard before. It was soft and mournful, happy and sad at the same time, something that grabbed my attention like never before. I remember everything kind of stopping, and my skin went all tingly, like small sparks going up and down my body. I watched out the window, at the tree in the front yard, the houses across the street, and the big white clouds in the blue sky, everything normal and still, ordinary and simple, and yet there was this sound, this voice, this music, carrying some secret message to my ears, changing how the houses looked, how the tree moved, how I saw things, my marbles, the wallpaper, even the sound of my mother doing the dishes... all of this became different, with this song and its brightness, its movement that touched a nerve in my chest and soared through to my legs, giving me a new feeling, a sensation that I can only describe as urgent: maybe at this point, life

became not the usual rhythm, of days with breakfasts and school, of TV and marbles, of eggs and my mother's apron, but something flexible, something that could be different, something to be created. I remember all this now, as I always have, and I can surely say that on that day, hearing that song, with the trees outside and the houses and the clouds, that my life began – my life as a musician, as a songwriter, as a traveller. Because of that song coming from the radio in the kitchen, that song that I heard by chance, all my energies for life started. When the song ended, it was as if I was thrown back into the day, of normality, and all I knew was that I wanted to feel that again, to have that sensation again, to feel that sense of excitement, of urgency – I needed that again. Making my way to the front door, leaving behind that small moment, a moment which still was taking shape in my head and body, like a seed planted from a mysterious hand, I forgot about getting the bus, forgot about school, forgot about the marbles on the living room floor, and I walked as if in a dream, with the time-line of days broken.