

LAMENT

by Rick Marcou

*Nights in white satin,
Never reaching the end,
Letters I've written,
Never meaning to send.*

The tape deck was carefully perched on the edge of the towel, not too close to the sand but still leaving enough room for him to lie down or sit up and people-watch. He still didn't know if these cassette players could take the summer heat, let alone sand getting in there. They were so new, so cool. Playing his music wherever he went, far out.

The late afternoon sun was still burning an orange glow, the ocean water blinding his eyes with a thousand twinkling lights. A Frisbee jolted him from his reverie, landing a foot from the deck. And then she appeared.

"Oh, wow, that was close! I'm so sorry about that."

"It's OK. No harm, no foul."

"That's one of those new tape players, right? I heard about those, haven't seen one yet."

"Yeah, it's a Sony. The sound is incredible. Almost as good as vinyl."

"Alriiiggghht.....wait, is that the Moody Blues? I love that song."

"Yeah, Nights in White Satin. Me too."

"It's got such a dreamy sound. Everytime I hear it, it takes me somewhere else. His pain, why he can't be with the woman he loves. It's so incredibly sad but even more beautiful. And haunting."

"Exactly. I feel the same way. I wonder why he doesn't go to her, you know, what's in the way. I think about how I would never want to be in that position, how I would just make it happen."

Her eyes brightened when he said that.

*Gazing at people,
Some hand in hand,
Just what I'm going through
They can't understand.*

The song started with the familiar opening. She quickly made her way to him through the tables, wedding dress notwithstanding.

“Daddy, dance with me.”

“OK, sweetie. My pleasure.”

“I know this was your song. Mommy would have wanted us to dance to this, right?” She looked up at him with pleading eyes, looking for reassurance she did the right thing.

“Absolutely. She’d be happy we’re dancing to this. And unbelievably proud of you, as am I.” He saw *her* now in his beautiful daughter, her grace and her effortlessness. Tried to remember the good times, before the bad ones.

“I miss her so much.”

“Me too sweetie.”

Beauty I'd always missed

With these eyes before,

Just what the truth is

I can't say anymore.

“Grampa, what is this song?” echoed from the back seat. “It’s weird.”

“It’s called Nights in White Satin. It’s one of my favorites.”

“Knights don’t wear satin. They wear armor.”

“Not those knights. Nights, like days.”

“Oh. It’s still weird. Sounds like that really old music, with no singing.”

“You mean classical?”

“Yeah, that.”

“It kind of is. It has violins and other instruments like they have in an orchestra.

Sometimes rock music is like this, with different instruments but still telling a great story. That’s what I like about it.”

His grandson thought about that. He was listening intently now.

“Grampa, I like this song too. Can you turn it up?”

“Gladly.” He reached over to the volume, taking his eyes off the road for a moment....

“What’s with the guy in the corner over by the window?” the new orderly asked.

“What do you mean?”, the nurse’s assistant stopped to answer.

“With the headphones, looking out the window.”

“That’s what he does, every day. He listens to the same song, at first he smiles, looks really happy. Then the smile goes away and he starts to cry. If he doesn’t take the headphones off himself we do it for him. It can get pretty rough. I think he’s remembering something bad, and he won’t let himself forget it.”

*And I love you,
Yes, I love you,
Oh, how I love you.
Oh, how I love you.*