

gift (iron man dream #3)

I'm in new york to visit my mom + dad
they're still living together
in the house our family moved out of 20 years ago
they don't appear to have aged since that time.

my dad seems unhappy + remorseful about his life
not the angry man I knew
he seems sad about his relationship with me + anxious
to make some kind of connection between us.

he + I are standing in the
big doorway of the garage he built
this is dad's territory
mom stays in the house.

he gives me a real old iron man comic book
but first he goes through it
tearing out stuff he says I'm not supposed to see
stuff that has something to do with work
his deletions appear random to me
I can't see a pattern of anything sensitive
in what he removes.

he describes in great detail the way iron man moves
including the precise number of seconds it takes
for iron man to respond to an attack
then dad asks me how long it takes
for me to respond to an attack.

the iron man comic he gives me is a one time only
special issue
this is the one I've been searching for
the one where iron man's face mask changes
from pointed + horned
to rounded + smooth.

in this issue
iron man reveals that he is actually a monk
when questioned
he explains that the monk is the other side of
his usual playboy/inventor/materialist identity.

in the dream
I recognize this comic book as
a very special gift from my dad
something important to him
something he's saved for a long time

it's a peace offering
something we both value.

in the dream
I feel touched yet saddened
our communication is still so indirect.

a comic book is no substitute
for a warm hug + loving words
between a father + a son.

Excerpted from *Iron Man Family Outing: Poems about Transition into a More Conscious Manhood* by Rick Belden. Copyright © 1990, 2008 by Rick Belden. All rights reserved.

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