

Joe and the Spiderman

by Brian Michael Barbeito

Once upon a time I sat in summer chairs beside cool vine walls. This was in a borough east of the major city, where families gathered in seasonal joy, by blooms fragrant, to worship the summer and its might. There is nothing diminutive about the world when one is content as all happenings acquire a celebratory air.

Joe talked there, in his own note, seated across from where I was, and he was animated when it came to comics and their contents. Joe, so old and wrinkled but with eyes gleaming and forthright. He had not seen comics in his country and called them books. Hey kid, he would call out, (my real name is Hayden, yet if he knew it I don't know that he ever used it, but it was not an affront, only that I was obviously just a kid for one and also simply that kid that could get him comics) can you get me some books, and if you can, do you have any Spiderman? I like Spiderman and to read his books. I told him I was a Silver Surfer man and fan but that was a matter too esoteric for Joe. Spiderman, he would counter, it is the Spiderman that I like! I would deliver on the books and brought him Spiderman when I could. He would call out, like an excited child, More Spiderman please!

Those days and times the world was novel and innocent, yet seasons fold in on themselves and after a curt handful of years I didn't really see Joe again.

A few decades later when the world and my world especially, was not nearly so textured or bright (Providence can only smile on certain people and not for an infinite time as its considerations are prayed for and desired by all), I sat with a woman that spoke to spirits. We were in the same geographical area as I had once been with Joe, but the world had since seen a different economy and mood altogether. Even if it were not so, I had changed, and surely things would have appeared different. More traffic than ever raced outside but the sun, strong and fixed, was still loyal to the earth.

There is a Joe here, said the woman. I told her that I did not know anyone by that name and I told her, truthfully in the moment I thought, that I had never known a Joe. He is here, said the woman once more, and he has what look to me to be magazines. There was a long pause while I searched the memory banks. Joe, I said, Yes! I used to give him comics. That was long ago. Well, said the woman, he is happy with his comics. And those comics are also still in existence in the physical reality, relayed the woman. With that I sat back a bit thinking what a thing the whole cosmos might be, and how I would aspire to be a simple and well-doing bodhisattva.

And that is how once upon a time I sat in summer chairs when the world was fine and bright and well, and again, many moons later, when it was not as well yet bright and with a contour of hope around it still as an old friend stopped past to visit from another world.

Nowadays, often it is the case that when inner and outer storms threaten, I try and think upon Joe and the Spiderman and how if summer days of joy and certitude in a goodness of things once were, that well, the often difficult world might take repose from its various kinds of trouble and even conspire to find in itself a chance for goodness again. Hey kid, can you bring me some more Spiderman next time? I read his books that you give to me. I like him, you know?

