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# TWO POEMS BY RICHARD ESTEVEZ

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## Fortune

*"Your winsome smile will be your sure protection."*

Actually, it was the thing that got me molested.  
My looks; my eyes, my smile- my big, big, juvenile smile.  
My lashes, my lips – taken for a girl by most.  
No matter how stupidly my father cut my hair,  
he couldn't shave those eyelashes  
or dial down that smile.

His was a whole head smile. One paternally large mug.  
A real grinning ass.  
It would leap out at you and instantly cover his face.  
A flashy enamel calling card.  
A big, jolly, people magnet.

His smile drew them in too.

He gave me to keep a version of that smile,  
underneath my model mother's eyes and lashes.  
You didn't have a chance against the combination.

YOU couldn't get enough of it – you would take chances at school,  
pulling me inside the coal shed on my way off the soccer pitch.  
That dark Victorian room, lumps of unused summer coal  
piled in the corner like installation art.  
Every breath you took, explosive.  
And everywhere you turned would leave a black smudge.

Like the more permanent blot you left on me.

Under the right factors of heat and pressure coal reveals the diamond.  
Your sooty hands didn't leave any hard mental diamonds shining in me,  
just the cracked and fragmented matrix where I pushed those lumps of coal  
deeper and deeper inside of me, like the slow growing tumours they were.

*"Fortune" came out of a NY Writer's Coalition literary workshop for survivors of sexual abuse. This exercise, like other exercises we do, was 20 minutes of writing in response to (in this case) being given a fortune cookie and asked to open and write about the fortune inside. This text is exactly what came out of those 20 minutes with virtually no changes or additions; only some minor editing and correcting.*

## Tea Served

Mom was genetically  
predisposed to drink  
tea  
every day,  
precisely  
at 4pm.  
No clock needed.

Tea and biscuits.

The kind of biscuits  
I wouldn't touch  
unless every other  
sweet thing in the house  
had been obliterated.

I didn't understand the ritual pleasure  
she derived each day,  
no matter the occasion,  
year, or season, but

the way to her heart was through a filtered bag.

I turn my adult nose up now  
at my wife's morning coffee,  
only Breakfast tea for me please;  
So dignified.

So civilized.  
Despite the trail of hemorrhaging,  
and strangled bags  
you left for dead  
everywhere you went.

So, creamy tea was  
one of the two legacies  
you left for me.  
That, and getting up  
early Greenwich Mean Time  
every July  
to watch the  
Ladies Wimbledon Final.

My first serve?  
Is now a pot of tea.  
My backhand?  
One of your biscuits.

*"Tea Served" came out of a Writer's workshop exercise comprised of selecting a mug and a tea bag and adding boiling water to steep. I then removed the tea bag and placed it on the paper I originally composed this text on, where it dried and left brown tea stains after the 20 minute free writing session.*

**Richard Estevez** is a visual artist, a graduate student in the history of art and design, and a library worker in Brooklyn, New York..