

Selections & Excerpts: *Soon Will Come the Light*

Thomas: On Living Alone

Meanwhile, my younger sister was living in a dormitory while she going to school, and I was still at home. One day I realized my father was financing this. So, mainly as a joke, I said, "Why does Mary get to have a dorm and I have to stay here?" Not expecting a reply, I got one anyway. "You find an apartment, and I will pay for it." I found an apartment. I have been living alone ever since, and loving it! A solitary life is an autistic's dream come true! I wouldn't have it any other way. My thanks to my parents for allowing this.

The first place I lived was in kind of a ratty neighborhood, just a few miles north of downtown Columbus. There were two rooms, a kitchen and bedroom. The bathroom was in the basement.

The rent was a very reasonable \$180.00 a month. It had carpeting and it was furnished. I was not really all that happy there, nor did I feel very safe in that neighborhood. But it could have been much worse, and it was a lot quieter than I thought it would be.

Eventually, though, I got into a fight with the landlady. She claimed the cat had given the entire complex fleas. The truth of it was that the stray cat outside was befriended by the girl living upstairs. This cat gave my cat fleas and the fleas spread from there. To me, this indicated it was time to move on.

Searching furiously for alternative low cost housing, I found a place on the campus of the Ohio State University. This was \$220.00 a month. My mistake was in picking a place that was right around the campus bars. The other place had been paradise compared to this.

Sirens woke me up every night. Car alarms woke me up every night. Drunk college students fighting over girls in tight jeans woke me up every night. And the worst part of living here was that these same students would take the liberty of urinating on my porch during the late night, bar hopping weekends. There was absolutely no security here. And I felt as though a stray bullet would crash through my window and find me at any moment. I made a note to myself to get out of there at my earliest convenience.

It wasn't until much later that SSI came along and I was able to leave that rat race behind. I am now living in a condominium with emphasis on quiet and security. The two things I had craved for years, I now have in abundance. And I am very happy living here.

Thomas: On Speech

Speech is hard for me. I can make people think I am "normal," but it takes much effort and energy. Some times more than others. These times seem to fluctuate at random unless stress is involved. There are, on occasion, still times when I want to talk, but I can't. I can try and try and try, but I can't talk. There is a fear holding me back. I do not know what it is I am afraid of, I only know that it is a feeling of fear unlike any other feeling of fear I have ever known. It is not that I do not want to talk, it is that I am unable to at that moment. I was asked by a parent once why it seems her child can talk fine at some times and why he cannot talk at all during other times. Many people have scratched their heads trying to figure this out. I'd like to offer this theory, based on personal experience.

I believe that fear is the dominant emotion in autism. People with autism do not usually know what it is that they are afraid of and I think this is the result of sensory overload. They can trust no one. But... there are times when things are so quiet and so placid, times when there is next to zero sensory stimuli, or times when they are so wrapped up in whatever activity they may be doing at the moment, that the fear fades. Just for a little bit. I believe this is when they decide to talk. Either that, or they are, at the moment, fighting one incredible war with the demons whirling within them. And even if they just say one little thing, it is a victory of sorts and they are in a sense winning the battle. And we should all be very, very proud of them. Because what they did was not easy. And it takes a very strong person to fight it.

Thomas: On Lack Of Knowledge

People often ask me what autism is when I tell them what I am doing for a living. I am amazed at the lack of knowledge on the part of the general population. The best example of this I can give is a jacuzzi party I had for some friends one year while my parents were out of town. It was Halloween and a friend was celebrating a birthday. One bozo decided to pour dish soap into the jacuzzi. All of a sudden I look down and there are all these bubbles. So I walk into the living room where the same guy notices all the bubbles on me. He stared at me, fixated on something. I knew he was looking at something, but I had no idea what it was.

"Flex your muscles," he said. So I did and he was fascinated. It turns out that he thought that part of autism was some kind of skin disfigurement and that the bubbles on my arms were actually a part of *me*.

Thomas: On Professionals

The professionals of the autism field have responsibilities. For instance, if the child is diagnosed as having autism, the professional should inform the parents the child is autistic, rather than saying he is "developmentally delayed." Too many times I have heard the tragic story that the parents were unaware of the diagnosis, simply because the doctor was not straight with them. Some parents have speculated that maybe the doctor was trying to spare the feelings, but they would rather have gotten the truth. The truth does hurt, but at least it is the truth. And you have to begin somewhere.

Professionals are also obligated to keep to date with research and therapies. More than once, I have paid to see a professional and ended up paying to teach them things about autism they already should have known. If your doctor does not seem to know as much about autism as you do, perhaps it is time to see about finding a new doctor.

Thomas: On Poetry

I have often thought that poetry existed for just one purpose; to show us how we see ourselves. To give ourselves a spiritual mirror with which to gaze at the wonder of humanity. Poetry can also be used as a window. Looking through the glass of words, you see into the private world of the writer.

There are but four things needed to create quality poetry. Pencil, paper, emotion, and inspiration. Armed with these tools of construction, we build our windows and mirrors to share with the rest of the world, or to share privately with that special someone.

Thomas: On Birth

Child Inside

Some people say
that life is a dream.
That it is all so surreal
and not at all what it seems.
But dreams are illusions
and sightings untrue,
and there is just no illusion
when it comes down to you.
Yet I almost believe
that this cannot be.
That something so beautiful
belongs now to me.
For you're a part of me now
and my life you will guide;
you're my son, you're my daughter,
you're my child inside.

Some people say
that life is a sin.
That we will end up as dust
where we once did begin.
They say it's already known
who will live, who will die,
and that we don't have the right
to ask anyone why.
Yet the life that you have
is just your's alone.
And you are free to make choices
all on your own.
But I am here if you need me
to hold when you cry.
I'll hold you close to my heart,
little child inside.

Some people say
that there's a Savior somewhere.
Others are searching,
asking if He is there.
The rest of them can't possibly
know how we feel.
They say that Jesus and Buddha
and the rest are not real.

Yet the mere thought of you
is all that I need
for my faith to grow strong
from just a small seed.
You're a gift sent from Heaven
where you once did abide.
And you're my little angel.
You're my child inside.

Some people say
that I won't make it through.
That there will be too much stress
for me to put up with you.
They say my mind will get cloudy
and my sad eyes will rain.
They say I'll pull out my hair
and that you'll drive me insane.
Yet I do not know
what they're thinking of,
for there is nothing stronger
than one mother's love.
So don't worry, child,
I'll just let it slide.
And I will love you forever,
little child inside.

Thomas: On War

Now The Sparrows

The war was on and the sparrows were flying
high above the trees, they saw it all.
Guns were loading, grenades exploding,
one by one, the soldiers fall.
The sparrows watched, remaining silent,
hearing faint in the distance a clock's lovely chime.
They watched as the blood flowed into the mud,
and it seemed like such a big waste of time.

On the beach, the war went on.
Men fought valiantly, drenched to the bone.
Then one of the sparrows was hit by an arrow,
and found he couldn't find his way back home.
But one was watching the sparrow falling,
and he found a chance to show love that day.
Surrounded by slaughter, friends dying in the water,
he knew he had to get that bird on its way.

So the soldier knelt close to the ground
and pulled out the arrow as bullets flew by.
He then let it go, and was pleased to know
the sparrow found it's way back up to the sky.
The man slowly stood to join his army,
cringing at the sound of bullets speeding past.
Then one hit his heart and tore him apart.
He fell to the ground, and breathed his last.

While he lay there, the men kept fighting.
Too busy to notice, no one saw him die.
But the sparrow was flying, saw the man dying,
and tears slowly formed in that bird's eye.
Blood on the hillside, blood on the water.
Children lay on the sand that sparkled so red.
The sparrows saw the view, but didn't know what to do.
They just knew the world would soon be dead.

Men kept dying while others kept trying
to kill all they could, though they didn't know what for.
They just kept shooting and the air kept polluting.
Now there's nobody left to fight anymore.
Except for the chime, all is silent.
A hatred so cold did this world in.
There's bones on the ground where flies buzz around
wondering what kind of place it had been.

And now the sparrows fight the tail winds
with memories of war locked in their heads.
As they fly, tears fall from the sky.
Soon the sparrows themselves will be dead.

Thomas: On Love

Later In The Morning

Early in the morning,
I watched you walk away
where sunshine kisses butterflies
and dancing flowers play.
The pain then came into your heart
and served just to remind you
that you're lost inside a hungry world
that wants so bad to find you.

The silver crown sits on your head;
what can they give you now?
All those sex-starved gentlemen
seem vague to you somehow.
You stare into those hungry eyes.
The thoughts, you cannot miss.
You soon see through their false disguise,
and you want more than this.

But what we had was different,
you can ask what it was of.
I turn this question back to you;
what is sex without the love?
Search hard for the answers,
I will wait here patiently.
Then later in the morning,
you'll come back to me.

Later in the morning,
you shall know my love is real.
That I care less about how you look,
and more about how you feel.
For I, too, have been hurt before,
I understand your pain.
I'll hold you while you cry out loud
so you'll feel good again.

Later in the morning,
you will come to understand
that I've been through that hell before,
you'll hold my shaking hand.
Later in the morning,
you will realize it is true
that you need this love from me
like I need love from you.

But that's later in the morning,
for now it is still dark.
So I'll wait for you to come around
and for the fire to start.
And when it's burning brightly
and there is light enough to see,
later in the morning,
you'll come home to me.