

Brighton Pier

by R J Tomlin

We walk on Brighton Pier, an ice cream in our hands,
The seagulls' squawks lost in the wind, the waves crash on the sands,
I ask if we'll go swimming, you say the sea's too cold,
I ask to build a sandcastle, you say that I'm too old,
I want to visit the museum, but you say that it's too far,
I ask again, but then you sulk, we head back to the car,
I really hate to say it, but it is surely true,
Although you do annoy me, I really do love you.

Parents' evening five years on, we're in a crowded room,
Noisy voices fill the space and lights cut through the gloom,
You've been skipping class again, your teacher says to me,
Playing in the music block, or reading in the library,
I drive us home and tell you that you're grounded for a week,
And later on I see that it's for two that we don't speak,
I hate telling you off, but sometimes I have to,
I know that I annoy you, but I really do love you.

Ten years on you call and say you've met someone unplanned,
And four years after that you say they've asked to take your hand,
You say your vows and kiss, your mum and I both cry,
Later on you ask me if I did, of course I lie,
Two years after that you say you're going to have a girl,
You say you'll call her Lily, and that she'll be your world,
Sometimes being a parent seems impossible to do,
But don't forget, though she'll annoy you, she really will love you.

I get a call at work one day; a frantic voice I hear,
A car crash by the riverside, I've reached my biggest fear,
They'd gone out drinking last night, swerved into the wrong lane,
A purse inside one of their pockets, the I.D. says your name,
Two weeks later, dressed in black, your mum cries on my arm,
We walk up to the casket, a note clutched in my palm,
It says 'I'm sorry baby, I wish there was something we could do,
to let you know, though you annoyed us, we really did love you.'

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We walk on Brighton Pier, an ice cream in our hands,
The seagulls' squawks lost in the wind, the waves crash on the sands,
Lily asks if we'll go swimming, I say the sea's too cold,
She asks to build a sandcastle, I say that I'm too old.