

12-1-2023

## Requiem in Dee Miner

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### Recommended Citation

Youngs, Evan (2023) "Requiem in Dee Miner," *Gandy Dancer Archives*: Vol. 12: Iss. 1, Article 6.  
Available at: <https://knightscholar.geneseo.edu/gandy-dancer/vol12/iss1/6>

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# Requiem in Dee Miner

“I liked how it took place in 1981.”

“What did you like about it taking place in 1981?”

“Because I was 16 then. And it brought back memories.”

“Are you crying?”

“No.” She wipes a tear. “I’m not crying. It’s just...it brought back so many memories.”

For someone who frequently says to me that she is driving on phone calls, Marilyn has not removed her eyes from the road. When I sit in the passenger seat I feel as dependent as before I got my license. Before we left for the movie theater, I had the choice of seeing either *Empire of Light* or some movie about father-daughter bonding. I did not want to endure her post-viewing interrogation on the ride home about whether I really love her as a mother: “Who do you love better, me or your father?” “Remember, you’ll always be my baby,” or why I am such an asshole. So I chose *Empire of Light*, which I knew nothing about. It does in fact take place in 1981, England.

“And the clothes and the music, it was very accurate. And I thought about being sixteen and young.” Her voice still sounds nasal and it trembles. “I didn’t think you were gonna like it because it was too sappy.”

“I liked it. I don’t really like sad movies, but this one was okay.”

“It wasn’t really a sad movie, just...I thought the saddest part was when he was beat up.”

*Empire of Light* is about a middle-aged bipolar manager of a cinema who begins a secret romantic relationship with her new coworker, a college-bound black man. Her coworker introduced her to two-tone, a then-burgeoning

genre that fused British punk and new wave with Jamaican ska and reggae. A flock of skinheads invade the cinema and viciously beat up her coworker.

“I didn’t realize they had racism back then. I thought it was just an American thing.” It surprises me that Marilyn even considers racism an American thing.

“The racism in Europe is way worse than the racism in America.”

“Well in America we had the Civil Rights Movement and the...riots. I think it was worse in America.”

The seclusion of Marilyn’s car gives her the liberty to force me into any conversation she wants. I try to combat this by wearing my big over-ear headphones. On the way to the Rome Capitol, I listened to the debut of Mr. Bungle’s album as protection. It is too late now to suction the headphones onto my ears without it being a rude statement. I want to change the subject to something that would spark neither *emotional bonding* nor an angry political debate. The first thing that always comes to my mind is music.

“You want to know what’s funny?” I remember that we just finished talking about a race riot. “Well, not funny, but, you know the soundtrack to the movie?”

“I didn’t know there was a soundtrack.”

“I mean all the songs in the movie. Not the songs like the records. I mean the ambient stuff.”

“The background music.”

“Yeah. You know who produced it?”

“No.”

I assume Marilyn, a leftover of the nineties, would recognize a name that is certainly not within the mild vibe of *Empire of Light*. “It was in the credits at the beginning if you caught it.”

“Who?”

“Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross.”

“Well, I don’t know who those people are.”

“They’re Nine Inch Nails.”

Her face brightens with confusion. Her mouth becomes an oval. “*Really?*”

Former edgy industrial rockstar sex symbol Trent Reznor is now mostly making ambient stuff. The Brian Eno type. The guy who screamed “I want to fuck you like an animal,” and “I’d rather die than give you control,” won an Oscar and a Golden Globe for scoring a Disney film. For him, the nineties are over.

“Did I ever tell you that my ex-husband Bob’s brother played with Nine Inch Nails when they were starting out? Look it up. Dee Miner. His real name was Larry Meinhold but his artist name was Dee Miner.”

She tells me this story every time I mention Nine Inch Nails. It is probably not true. Nine Inch Nails effectively began as a Trent Reznor solo project and

existed as a true band only in touring. There were a few bands that did open for the band's first 1990 headlining tour that have faded into unresearchability: Monkey Fear, This Is Our Daughter, Dharma Head. Still, because Bob Meinhold told Marilyn the quintessential Boomer claim of attending Woodstock, I find Larry's claim of playing with Nine Inch Nails questionable.

"Well, Larry played with them when they were starting out. Look up Dee Miner. D-E-E Miner, M-I-N-E-R."

"Was he on any of their albums?"

"No...he's still playing in Los Angeles. He tried to make it big as a rock star." Her voice turns cynical. "Never really got anywhere I guess."

I search on my phone for as much information as I can get about Dee Miner. The only band the Internet lists him with is Black Tongued Bells, a Los Angeles blues rock band with one album from 2013 called *Every Tongue Has A Tale To Tell*. They have a Facebook page and the most recent post is from last year, advertising "a celebration of the life and music of the late great Dee Miner."

*Diane Martin: He was one of the BEST!!*

*Donna Norman: Dang, I'm on the wrong coast, but I'll definitely be there in spirit!! One of the best!! RIP LM*

*Paul Balbirnie: hopefully you will post some video of this event. he would be really delighted I'm sure*

Another post further down announces his death another year prior. Donna Norman shares a very blurry photo of another very blurry photo of Dee Miner in shaggy hair, a cherry red guitar, and a black chest-baring shirt straight from Lindsay Buckingham's seventies wardrobe.

I break the news to Marilyn that it seems like Larry "Dee Miner" Douglas Meinhold died in July, 2021. She gasps louder than I expect her to. She tells me more about Larry/Dee than the factoid she usually dispels. When she and Bob lived in the rentals across the canal, Larry would stay in their house between tours.

"He was the only one that was nice to me at Bob's funeral. He was the only one in that family I actually cared about." She snuffles.

Bob died twenty-six years ago in Toledo, Ohio while visiting family. It was liver cancer; Marilyn says he was an alcoholic. According to Marilyn, the Meinholds hated her so much that they did not inform her of her husband's death until much after the fact. This was probably because their marriage was not functional. It does not surprise me when Marilyn says they argued a lot and would estrange themselves for days. They never had kids, only intermittently foster children. Marilyn thought she could not conceive until she

tested positive for my sister. In reality, Bob's time in Vietnam exposed him to enough Agent Orange to castrate him.

I feel a tension of curiosity and unease whenever Marilyn talks about life before she met my father. When she does, it is like I am looking into a past that can yield a much different future in which I am somebody completely different. What if Bob became my father? What if I lived pre-Internet? What if Bob died later letting my mom know her fertility status even later, and she raised me on Peppa Pig instead of PBS? What if I never had a sister? Or I had a brother? What if I never existed at all?

Where would I be, but also, where would Marilyn be? Would she even be my mother?

The car ride home is silent. Marilyn's tears dry. I keep my headphones around my neck instead of covering my ears. I keep the Mr. Bungle album I am listening to on pause. The flailing randomness of the music would feel like I am hiding the duration of her reaction behind the music, something that can exist at any time. I return to it the day after when I walk my dog alongside Oneida Lake, the water I call home. I write about home miles away from here near another, larger lake. I am far from marrying, but I constantly decide to never raise kids. I do not think I could bear to explain my life prior to them and burden them with questions and hypotheticals. I keep walking my oblivious dog, who knows nothing about my personal life other than how much time I spend in the forbidden upstairs, and that "walk" is a keyword for going outside and seeing the world he can not explore alone. I wish I was more like him.