

The garden in summer

I remember my back garden in summer, how my brothers and I would create whole worlds out of just the tiny stretch of lawn. We would be trekking through a rain forest one day, holding sticks as our only weapons against nature; and then the next day we would be digging a hole to Australia; unfortunately we only dug about 5 feet but the hole soon became another way of tormenting each other. I remember, one day, my brother, his friend and I, covered the whole with sticks, and bracken and tempting Peter (my middle brother) to walk on it, convincing him that it was safe. It took him a long time to see the “funny side”. I remember the old metal climbing frame that would daily be transformed into a den, a base out of old blankets and rugs – until one day it rained before we could dismantle it and so we couldn’t use it as our army base for the next couple of days so we had to improvise instead. Once, they put the slide on the top of the top rungs, naming it the “death slide” declaring it “safe” and convincing me to take the plunge and “slide” the 10 or so feet when actually I just fell, crumpling at the bottom only to leap and shout “again, again!!”. There is a picture of us sitting on it, and just that one piece of paper can take me back 12 or so years to the times where “playing” came as naturally as breathing. Out of all the trees in my garden, the cherry tree stands out the most. Its gnarled trunk was at a slight slant which made climbing it much easier and at the top, the branches flattened out - very convenient for sitting on; I remember the day when we braved the height and climbed the beach tree (with a ladder of coarse) and stood in its massive branches, not being able to actually climb it, the sheer size intimidated me so standing there was quite enough, watching my anxious mother stare up at us – not being able to do anything; and our curious neighbours gaze at the scene, probably amazed that my parents allowed a 4 year old in a 60 metre high piece of wood. I loved it most when our friends came to stay, and we made a mud bath in the flower beds, or constructed a little wooden hut which we would plead our parents to sleep in, but of course we were not allowed; or when we would stretch an old tennis net across the lawn, tying it to one of the washing pole and tree, and play tennis, myself and my friend fighting over being ball girls. Naturally such a conventional form of entertainment did not keep us distracted for long. Those summers seemed to go on and on, the endless days of climbing trees and running around the grass. Now I look back I am amazed that I never got bored, because thinking about it, our garden was not that big, I don’t think that I would be able to keep myself occupied for six weeks in such an ordinary space. Then, I used to hate my brothers, hated how one day they were perfectly nice, and then the next, they were horrible bullies who would torment me or even worse, exclude me from their exciting adventures. Interestingly, now I miss them, I miss their company; I miss the house being full of people. And now I am the only child, the last one, the “baby”.

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