

A Round Room, A Blue Room, Finding the Fence, and a Lot of Side Comments.

I remember sitting in a round room. But it was not round to be honest, I'd say it was hexagonal, but the mind of adult generalisations was far away as I with a pack of manic friends, ran circles around our adolescence carer - an older brother of my compadre in this battle, Sonia. Our five year old selves found this a great sense of fun - the supposed guardian, Arin, barely 19 ended up bound to the floor beneath several five year old terrors that were smirking and mimicking past battle scenes of the felling of the one who was supposedly in charge.

Children of five have extremely selective memories. We seemingly forgot we were sitting on a man despite him writhing beneath us, longing for freedom and suddenly found ourselves upturned on the floor as Arin, who is to this day, surprisingly tall, towered over us and began to laugh. As small children do, we laughed. We kept on laughing. We started crying, and then laughing again, and then as if nothing had happened we went back to doing whatever small children do in rooms that aren't really round (but actually hexagonal) do. I believe this may have been running in circles.

And then there was the blue room. This room was actually blue (as opposed to the obvious lie about the 'round' room). Actually, I lied. I apologise. The walls were blue, the rest however was a subtle brown, wicker creation of chairs, tables, ornaments and goodness knows what in a variety of hues because, as any six year old knows, avoiding trouble means avoiding anything higher than your nose. It was in this definitely slightly darker than normal blue room (which only really had blue walls, not even a ragged burnt blue carpet) in which we played our by then, infamous game - the animal game. It was a game which had over the years required deep and complex refining of your animal. Did I not mention the rules to this game? This game had no rules, no game play; it didn't even really have a point. It was almost an art form - it could be made into a film. The elegant firefly played by Matti, a crazed (and still crazy) boy who in a very rare moment of genius came up with the very amusing idea of fireflies actually being on fire and exceeding red-hot agony (every six year old knows this to be true) and proceeded to run around the room knocking over all those ornaments higher than his nose and running into the very blue walls and frequently mashing his nose onto the white moulding. In Matti's eyes the moulding he more frequently met, was much more bearable than the shiny, sparkling brassy door handle which even he recognised to be more than a little bit painful and would require escorting up the long flight of stairs to where the adults sat talking about terribly boring things, and be consoled by his mother. We wondered why adults did such things as sitting in a room for hours on end. We reasoned they had their own game which required so much refining it was better they weren't disturbed. I mean, what else could they be doing in there?

And then there were the never ending grounds. Firstly a giant hollow bush which was frequently used to host tea parties (with the milk taken from the

coffee lounge in those unusually shaped containers which contained a ridiculously small amount of milk). Most degenerated into a battle zone upon who was captured in the bush. My friend Emma and I frequently hid in this bush when bed time drew near. The supreme intelligence of a seven year old was only foiled each day by someone whose age went into double figures. A seven year old would never win but nevertheless we stood defiant in our bush.

Beyond the bush lay a expanse of green grass splattered with daisies (always used to make necklaces which always broke) and further on, an elevated area with more grass and with a short sprint to the right lay a basketball pitch (which we avoided as concrete was not knee-friendly). If you continued on you found yourself passing two giant oaks separated by not only a measurable distance, but by a volleyball net (which nobody really used). Passing these oaks signified the entrance into a lush forest. Daily it changed and as we grew older we ventured further and further into its depths discovering new trees top climb to; an abandoned bench, a bonfire site and by the age of nine, the fence.

This was no barbed wire or menacing steel but a simple wooden fence encircling what we knew. Beyond lay a beautiful field of gold which never stilled and swayed and swayed some more and we watched with the naive memorisation of nine year olds. It was hard to leave and detach myself from, but this was only beaten by the discovery of the Chinese Garden. It was in itself remarkable as was the golden field except instead of the mesmerising movement of whatever grain was growing there, here was an unmatched stilled tranquillity; a simple brilliant blue pond of unimaginable depths surrounded with an innumerable number of shades of purple and green and blue and yellow and all the colours I could not name. Being encircled by trees and the odd silver shimmer from some sort of reflection gave of a sense of uncertainty but also of peace as you sat on a wrought iron bench and just between the trees, watch a giant yellow orb sink into the abyss leaving the sky clear and bright with fireflies stuck into the fabric of the night. It was an apt ending but in truth, it was only a beginning.

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