
July 2014

Sunday Mornings Spent

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Recommended Citation

Grohalski, Analiese (2014) "Sunday Mornings Spent," *The Laureate*: Vol. 10 , Article 34.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/laureate/vol10/iss1/34>

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Sunday Mornings Spent

When I was a child, the trees compiled into a forest, a haven instead of the small bit of woods that they were. The moss-covered trunks stretched for miles to my young eyes, reaching high for their Mother Sun but refusing to leave the comfort of their father's land. Hidden in the center of these woods, a river flowed, methodically winding between the polished rocks.

Our goal, my four siblings and myself, was to cross the bridge. There was our side, the side where we ran wild as kings and queens, and the other side of the bridge. On the first tree on the other side a sign hung: no trespassing. It glowed in its red paint, beckoning us to cross the few two-by-fours nailed crudely against a fallen tree.

It wasn't the safest bridge, but what is safety compared to adventure? What is a little water compared to the acrobatics into an unknown, forbidden earth?

Unfortunately for us younger, less courageous siblings, there was a two-foot gap from the end of the bridge to the other side. For me, stuck in the middle, I usually hung back on the rotting oak. I let the sign mock me, even more so when my two older brothers took the leap onto a soft patch of grass.

I would stand on the un-sturdy wood, swaying to the lull of the water, waiting. Waiting to become older, to grow an inch taller so I would be able to follow my brothers and see the bridge from a new perspective.

Well, I grew and I jumped. I ran through the untroddenun-trodden fields of overgrown grass, smelling lilac and clover weaving through the blades. I smiled a smile only a child could hold and danced with the breeze. But I didn't stop growing. I continued to age and soon I forgot the joy of the woods and the creek and the forbidden land. My mind turned to school, sports and friends, which took up most of my time. I began visiting my father's house less and less, until it was just one weekend a month. When I did go, I noticed the woods from the inside the window and I would briefly remember.

The youngest sibling still retreats into the trees almost every day, but the church near our house is expanding. They bought out almost everything from their borders to where the water greets the shoreline of the creek.

On the last day of Thanksgiving Break, my brother decided to wander through the trees and I joined him. The brisk air filled my nose with the decaying of leaves and fire. The oranges, browns, and yellows shattered underneath our sneakers as we approached the woods, as we approached my memories.

It was too open. The covering of large trees was absent and I couldn't understand this new blinding light. Then, I looked around me. The pines and oaks no longer stood proudly, pointedly. They laid along the edge of the pathways, once small and trampled only by little feet now expanded from tire mark to tire mark.

"What happened?" I asked my brother as he jumped onto a stump. The smells had even become more open, less like woods and more like industry. My brother picked up a stick and chopped forcefully at a nearby bush.

"The church." His answer was short, quick and needed no explanation. We continued walking down the paths, too much like a road, in silence. Words would have been inappropriate while paying respects to our once play land. We just walked.

My brother walked and I stumbled, I wasn't as graceful as I used to be. Finally, I tried to find a walking stick for balance but each one snapped with any weight.

"You can't have a walking stick when everything's dead," he said.

We quickly found the creek, and I told my brother I wanted to see the bridge. It was more difficult to get to, hidden by the overgrowth around it, but it was still there. The water had risen so it almost engulfed the fallen trunk, but the two-by-fours still clung onto it. Even though there was much less support to walk on, I could tell it was possible.

I stepped up to my old friend, but remembered how clumsy I had become. I walked like an infant through these woods, but as a child I could fly. Now, I stood near the waters edge and watched the ripples. There was no sign tempting me to cross.

Soon, the cold wrapped around us too tightly and we were forced to return to the shelter of the house. I left the trees, knowing demolition would begin the following Monday. I knew I would never be able to walk in solitude to the creek, feel the bark on my fingertips.

Next time I see that land, it will be a parking lot. The church is taking away my heaven.