

Thoughts of Youth



PURPLE MONSTER'S COMING!

I was a sneaky little kid. My favorite thing to do was scaring my baby brother Austin. Even though he was frightened of most everything, he loved to watch horror movies. His favorite movie was *Salem's Lot*. He watched it all the time. The vampire in the movie scared him the worst, and he called it "Purple Monster."

My other brother Justin and I scared Austin so much that he was afraid to go to the bathroom alone, so Mom made Justin and me take turns going with him. One night we were watching "Purple Monster," and it was my turn to go with Austin. I was about ten years old at the time, and Austin was four. He just stood at the toilet and wouldn't pee.

I finally got tired of waiting, so I slapped the shower curtain very hard and I screamed, "Austin, Purple Monster's coming!" Austin screamed as loud as he could, ran down the hallway with his underwear around his ankles, wrapped himself around Mom's leg, and peed all over her. It was so hilarious that I fell onto the floor laughing. My mom whipped me hard and grounded me for a whole month. It was very well worth it, though.

Shirley Mercer

INNOCENCE

Beyond the broken glass lying in the street,
Beyond the car fumes and tall skyscrapers,
Beyond the horrors of pain and death,
Beyond the T.V. and tabloid papers,
Exists a world of candy canes,
Of Barbie dolls and matchbox cars,
Of G.I. Joes and comic books,
Of pretend trips to distant stars.
Where children play and go to school.
Where everyone thinks pretending is cool.
Where swing sets and sandboxes are daily fun.
Where hatred is not known by anyone.
We all once were children.
We laughed and we played.
We called to our parents to see what we'd made.
We woke up one morning to realize we'd lost
Something so precious, so precious and dear.
But look to the children. You're certain to find
That innocence somewhere quite near.

Kandice DeMare

YOUTH

To be young again would be a wonderful thing
It's like running through the fields in spring.

To smell all the flowers as I go by
It's like my first swing, or my first slide.

Oh for those days when I could play
With no obligations, no bills to pay.

To turn back the clock for an hour or so;
I'd want to stay, but I'd have to go.

I see my youth now in my children's eyes
As I watch them swing towards the sky.

Andrea Slotter

WEST END MEMORIES

These are some of my childhood memories from when I was living in the west end of Cincinnati: listening to the radio, going swimming, and going on the church picnic.

The older people in the neighborhood would tell me on Sunday, "I want to see you in church. I'm going to let your father know this evening, when he comes home from work."

Every evening my father would turn on the radio to listen to the evening news. My sisters and brothers and I would sit on the floor in the front room and listen to the news with him. He would tell us that listening to the news can help you with your school homework.

Every night after the news went off, we would stay in the front room sitting on the floor waiting for the evening story to come on. My father would buy large bags of cooked pork rinds from "Peanut Jim".

We would eat pork rinds and peanuts and listen to the story on the radio. We would use our imaginations about what was happening in the story.

During summer vacation, when I was out of school, I would get up about nine o'clock in the morning and go swimming with my friends until about noon.

At noon, I would walk around the neighborhood asking people if they needed someone to go to the store for them. The money I made I would save to take my girlfriend to the movie on the weekend.

Every year, the church would give a picnic for the church members. That was one of the best days of the summer. We went to a park called Fernbank on the Ohio River. We played ball, we danced, and they had every kind of food that you wanted to eat.

Listening to the radio with my family, going swimming almost every day, going to the store for people to make money for the weekend, and going on the church picnic are some of my favorite memories. I will never forget living in the west end of Cincinnati.

Robert Wynn

A LESSON I NEVER FORGOT

The greatest memories always come from our childhood. Who doesn't remember a prank from his childhood or tenderness from somebody? In my case it came when I was three years old, and my father bought a country home close to my grandmother's house in the small town of Sacatin, Colombia. To live beside my grandmother was a blessing. I felt like a free bird, and I started visiting her every morning. In order to go there, I had to go over a little bridge. The smell of the flowers and the songs of the birds made this a wonderful place. She made friends with everybody, and the little children used to call her "Grandma." She had a lot of flowers and different kinds of fruits that she would give to people. She had the knowledge of healing the sick with natural medications. Rich people who lived in the neighboring town of Chippre had heard about my grandma and sometimes came to see her and ask her for healing medication.

One morning I went to my grandmother's house. As usual, I found her preparing breakfast. The smell of coffee, hot chocolate, scrambled eggs, and hot arepas whetted my appetite. My grandmother's kitchen was big. She used to cook on a wood stove, and that gave the food a special taste. In the corner she had a small bench where I used to sit, and in my little girl's mind, I would play make-believe with the things my grandmother had in her kitchen. The little wooden box in which she kept chocolate looked like a wonderful dresser for my dolls' clothes. The little pans and jars would be great to play with, too. In addition to that, she had a beautiful little grotto with the Virgin Mary in it. I wanted it very much but knew that I couldn't ask her for it because she told me one day, "This is a treasure that your grandpa gave me when I was fifteen years old."

One day I couldn't control myself and asked her for some of the things she had in her kitchen, and she said, "I

need all these things, even the grotto with Mary. When I die, I will leave them for you.”

I replied, “So when are you going to die?”

“I don’t know about that, but I do know that I don’t feel very well. Maybe one of these days I will die.”

“Maybe tonight?” I asked.

She agreed, “Maybe tonight.”

The next day I went to my grandmother’s house, and I was very excited because all those nice things were going to be mine. But when I got there, the smell of coffee, hot chocolate, etc., told me there was something wrong. She was there in the kitchen. “Good morning, Emilly,” Grandma said.

“Good morning, Grandma. Why did you lie to me?”

I replied.

“What? What are you talking about?” asked

Grandma.

“You told me yesterday you would probably die last night,” I said.

“So do you want me to die? Go away! I don’t like you!” she yelled at me.

I was very disappointed and went crying to my house. Later on I saw my mother and grandma laughing together.

Ten years later I was preparing for my first vacation. When I went to my grandmother to say good-bye, she was crying and told me that she was not feeling well lately, and when I come home, she might not be there. I told her my vacation was only for fifteen days, and that we would go to church together again when I returned. I was a little upset, but I loved to go to my uncle’s house in Pereira, so I went. Ten days later my father appeared unexpectedly to get me. I did not want to go, but he was very serious and firm.

When I got home, my mother was wearing a black dress. I asked her why, but she did not say anything, so I went to my room. My older sister was there and said, “This box is for you.” When I opened it, there was the beautiful

grotto with Virgin Mary in it and all the stuff I had asked my grandmother about ten years ago.

“Oh, no! No!” I cried.

My sister hugged me and said, “Yes, she died, but she said these things are yours.”

It was painful to remember what happened years ago when I asked her for those things. I was very upset like everyone else, but my sadness was deeper because I had learned the lesson of how far more important human beings are than any material thing.

Emily Nutter

STOLEN CHILD! LIFE IN URBAN AMERICA

Many years ago, there lived a child who was born to be a king. He enjoyed all of life's pleasures. He had food, clothing, shelter, and all of his heart's desires. In the middle of the night, he was taken to a far away country and left all alone.

As he sat alone in this deserted country under a coconut tree, he tried to figure out how to survive in this unfamiliar place. This young king is in a position, much like our children today. Many say that our youth are a lost generation, but in fact, they are like the stolen child living in the unfamiliar place. Both are struggling to survive. As this young frightened child sat under the coconut tree, a coconut fell upon his head.

This one coconut was the only resource he had. Many decisions had to be made to use the entire coconut in order to survive. Children living in urban America, like this young king, are living with limited resources. They often turn to selling, buying, using drugs and alcohol to escape from reality. These children are unaware of who they are and where they come from.

Some people believe that urban children are a lost generation. Our children are not lost. They were stolen by a force much greater. It is our responsibility to go out and rescue our children from poverty, abuse, drugs, and alcohol. Like the child who was born to be king, our children are all born with a purpose. Would someone please help the child find his way home?

Carl McDonald Sr.

