I Remember the Days Were Long in the Summer

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Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"but the break from school seemed short in its entirety. The trust of our parents, who both worked at Eastman Kodak, left my older brother, Chad, and me at home without supervision. Although our obedience and contentment, or most likely our timidness usually kept us close to home, our days were typically filled with activities that help capture the moments and memories of youth and growing up. At the ages of eleven and fourteen it was not difficult to entertain ourselves, especially with the new addition of a swimming pool. Our cousin Rob, who was fifteen, would often journey to our house on his BMX bike to enjoy our company, and of course, a swim."

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but the break from school seemed short in its entirety. The trust of our parents, who both worked at Eastman Kodak, left my older brother, Chad, and me at home without supervision. Although our obedience and contentment, or most likely our timidity usually kept us close to home, our days were typically filled with activities that help capture the moments and memories of youth and growing up. At the ages of eleven and fourteen it was not difficult to entertain ourselves, especially with the new addition of a swimming pool. Our cousin Rob, who was fifteen, would often journey to our house on his BMX bike to enjoy our company, and of course, a swim.

Our home was set in the country, about three miles from the small town where we attended school. With few neighbors and surrounding fields of corn, we were out of reach of any watchful eyes. This rural setting also made it somewhat of an adventure to reach new, exciting stimuli. The three of us relied heavily on our bicycles for transportation to the awaiting experiences that might shape our memories of childhood and our emergence into adolescence and adulthood.

On a day like most others, after hearing the resounding dial tone of yet another irritated subject of a prank call, we were once again forced to look outside our immediate environment for entertainment. We decided that Rob and I would ride to town to rent a video. I was excited by this possibility because I adored my cousin and felt I could do anything by his side.

The trip was relatively void of conversation or occurrence, perhaps Rob was anxious. Over what, I could not fathom. The heat and humidity both hovered around ninety, and after a half-hour of laborious pedaling we arrived at Viele’s. Viele’s was an old general store that was the first in our town to advance into the new age of video rentals. Outside, the sun blistered and peeled the old blue paint from the store walls. Opening the door gave way to the whir and comfort of the air-conditioning inside. Freezers and fridges made up the walls; aisles with candy, chips, and cat food lined the store like the ribs of man, holding everything in place. The videos were kept in a room at the back of the store. The place was deserted besides the cashier reading that week’s edition of TV Guide, which adorned the faces of my current favorite, the A-Team. Without hesitation Rob moved through to the doorway. Dehydrated and boyish, I was distracted by the three-foot plastic dog holding a cup of Slush Puppy in the corner. I found myself longing for its sweet, icy nectar, but upon Rob’s beckoning I hurried along.

The room was small, empty video boxes lined the walls and an old man was seated in a chair behind the counter with a 15-inch black and white TV, busily working on a crossword puzzle. Glancing up briefly, he greeted us with, "hello men," to which we both responded simply with a nod. Paying no attention to Rob, I began browsing. I was interested in many, but was unfamiliar with most of the titles. Upon seeing a copy of Star Wars I began reminiscing with Rob about our viewing of it atop his parents station wagon at a drive-in theater, which I, of course being four at the time, fell asleep during, when he interrupted me by motioning me to his side. I could tell by his demeanor that I should be prepared to take a risk that I normally wouldn’t. When I reached him I noticed that he was holding in his hands a box covered with women wearing nothing but bikini bottoms, the title of which was blurred by my sudden loss of homeostasis. I was flooded by a storm of emotions. I did not recall ever seeing an unclothed bosom until this day and did not know how to react. I fell silent.

My daring cousin approached the counter and I, braving the challenge, followed. The old man was contentedly seated in his tattered green recliner chair. He had been paying us no attention until we arrived at the counter. Laboriously rising from his weathered perch the old
man asked, "All set?" We nodded our heads. "You guys know that you have to be eighteen to rent this, don't you?" He said peering over his glasses, without the familiar, heightened tone of doubt.

I swallowed hard, but Rob responded with confidence, "Yes sir. We certainly do." He paid the old man and we rushed out of the store completely passing by the Slush Puppies and through the exit. We laughed and joked about the old man's lack of intelligence all the way to my house. I was elated. We had, so we thought, fooled him and made off with something we were years from being able to obtain.

When we arrived home I was shocked to learn that Chad was surprised, not by our choice, but that we actually pulled it off. Brimming with anticipation, he immediately popped the tape into the VCR. Those feelings that I swallowed down at Viele's instantaneously began to flow back like an acidic belch. I was terrified of what I was about to see. I had given no thought to sexuality before now.

Music, pouty lips, and moans. I was disgusted by the perversity that seemed to linger in the room like the cheap perfume that I imagined was worn, but the unmasked, flesh of these women strangely aroused me. Not blinking, nor thinking, I was neither here nor there. Trapped between my burning ears, blood was boiling and synapses were flashing. Chad and Rob's approvals, which were increasingly audible, but failing to ever penetrate the confused, heart-poundingly deafened consciousness of the child who struggled to be, formed at first sight of each successive lady's seductive dancing. I was captivated by stomach-turning desire as my mind flashed pictures of the women in my life. Mom, Grandma, and even Aunt Linda. Could they be like this? No! I suddenly hated the men in my life, especially the two who were rushing to become, now sitting here before me drenched in lusty smiles. I was being uprooted from a solid Lego foundation where G.I. Joes and Matchbox Cars captivated their captor. The innocence of childhood was being replaced with the fuzzy desire of something foreign, unknown, and not understood. My daydreams and nightmares would never be the same.

Although horrified by the larger picture of life I had seen painted and splashed across that small screen, I could not quell my dizzying curiosity. The guilt of it all stirred in my tummy. I couldn't help but wonder if, and hope that, this was what Adam felt at his first sighting of Eve, but I still, for a long time, strongly doubted that someone in the Bible could be capable of that sort of perversity. However, I eventually came to terms with my discovery and realized that my behavior and reaction was normal. And from this I had an increased interest in girls; I had realized my strong attraction to the female shape.

That fall I continued on into puberty. Everything moved quickly. Days felt shortened. My changing body was seething with hormones and slowly affirming an undeniable journey into manhood. I timidly, clumsily achieved the adoration of young ladies, surging me into a whole other state of confusion. Relationships! Everything began to seem even more complicated than what I had felt during and after that movie. Summers felt brief and were filled with quests of unrequited puppy love. The days since then have gone by with an even more unrelenting quickness. Now, I am married, and through my journeys I have learned to cope with the opposite sex, and marvel in what she has to offer. I only hope that our days together in autumn are as long as those were once my summer.

-Brett Furguson *