

August 1995 - When I grow up I want to be an imaginary friend

Larry Moffitt
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When I grow up I want to be an imaginary friend.

In the summer of 1955, I am six. Every summer is the summer of wasps. And dogs and chickens and feral cats on the dirt farm of Clyde and Kathryn Brown, three miles outside Fairland, Oklahoma. Grandparents.

I walk down the red dirt road every afternoon, slipping out after lunch in the heat of the day to get out of taking a nap. I wasn't put on this earth to take naps. If I am not in the house, bothering anyone, no one thinks about me napping.

The dog and I converse as we walk. I don't speak to the dog; we converse. Duke is fine and happy with being a border collie, and would I like to throw a stick anywhere? Duke rattles on incessantly, making little sense. He's pretty hyper but I'm fine with that. The air is so hot it has its own smell and a faint humming sound. The pebbles of the county-graded road enter through the hole in my canvas hightop sneaker.

Loneliness lies silently upon my shoulders. It slinks upward and sits on my head, squashing my cowlick flat. Then it covers my head, hanging down over my eyebrows. I, and the ache of my aloneness, are inseparable.

At the creek, she waits in blue. A few years older than me; maybe the age of my young school teacher. We talk and play games. Skip stones and sing many, many songs. Her, me and Duke.

One day she said, "Next year you will be seven and I will not be here anymore."

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