

## The Field

The wilderness behind my house was known as “the field” to my family and friends. It was a vast, rolling grassland bordered by a forest to the west, a marsh to the east, my neighborhood to the south, and a pond on the north. In the forests were tree houses and brush and muddy patches and streams, which I constantly fell into to my mom’s behest. The marsh was contained in a steep hillside valley and held a second, smaller pond. The pond itself was linked to a third pond which I only saw a handful of times, and contained many mussels and fish. I went canoeing on this pond quite a bit with my dad and my brother. The rest of the field remained unexplored, and now there is no possible way to explore it.

When I was seven years old, the wilderness behind my house was leveled along with my belief in someone to always keep you safe from reality and most of my faith in mankind; however, I also discovered that change is absolutely necessary to moving forward. My dad did the best he could to keep the owner of the field from selling it, and attended a meeting downtown concerning the issue, but he couldn’t do anything, the first time he wasn’t able to. The field was to be destroyed for a new housing development.

One day we discovered that the pond had been drained. Then the outer, unexplored areas of the field were bulldozed. I prayed and bargained in attempts to rescue the field, even asking Dad if he could buy it. But there was no way he could, and one day after I got back from school the entire field was gone. Only dirt, rocks, piled trees and rubble remained. My brother & I went out to explore this brave new world, traversing its infinite dirt mounds and valleys, the whole area looking like another planet. This desolate destruction site was filled with the stench of human interference and caked with mud.

Every week the dirt was pushed around and remaining trees were burned in huge bonfires. The site was never the same twice. One day a gaping pit was behind our yard, the next a sewer pipe system looking like the remains of a post-apocalyptic war zone was set into place,

and then there were more pits and mini-ponds and mud after rain. This no-man's-land was actually fun to roam about. Its ever-changing landscape I remember almost more so than the field. But even this was brought to an end as house frames and roads went up. Even our late cat Topaz's grave was demolished accidentally in the mayhem.

Soon everything came to a screeching halt as the work was completed and families moved in. It all took three years long, and when it was done I saw a horrible transformation completed. The houses, shoddily and quickly built, were very similar, as if stamped out by a cookie-cutter. Walking down the silent streets was like walking through dystopian Camazotz from *A Wrinkle in Time*. Almost identical SUVs were parked in every driveway; a third car to carry themselves three places at once; a disgusting picturesque gated community for the fearful to hide from a grotesque reality, blandly making it even more so.

A fat foreman drove around in his truck to scare off kids who wandered around the neighborhood as it was constructed. He followed us around occasionally, as we sometimes ventured into half-built houses for games of hide-and-seek. The owners of the site of course considered the best use for this land as a moneymaking real estate block; I doubt they even visited their *investment*. I'm sure they had no inkling in their withered corpse-hearts that a few kids might know of a better purpose. My dad eyed the houses as they were built with garbage and crummy particleboard walls. He said the houses would probably last ten years before repair was needed. This was the ultimate desecration of the spirit of the field – and even of the magical early construction site – replacing the fantastic and wonderful with shoddy mass-produced housing developments.

As time went on, I regretted more and more that I had not fully explored the field. It could have been an outside camping dream or a great wandering territory for games. Instead we now use a smaller flood retention area, "The Creek," which pales in comparison to the vastness

of the field we once had (though it is nonetheless legendary in our hearts). It pains me to think of all the experiences lost with the passing of the field.

Sadly, all of this may have been essential to my moving forward in life. The lesson that nothing stays the same forever is invaluable, especially in adolescence when childhood is left behind and you are forced to change or be abandoned by society. I guess that as one must adapt, so too must the swarm called society, even if it means cheap housing developments & crushed dreams replacing open wilderness & childlike innocence. I pray madly that one day our mistakes will be realized and we will correct them, even if it takes as long as it takes for a field to regrow and for a pond to refill; but darkly in my soul I fear there may indeed be nothing to cling to in this lonely, fallen, alien world.

