Grow Like Weeds

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Grow Like Weeds

Here in small white houses, young girls roll balls back and forth in narrow hallways, dress Barbies on matted grey carpet in white-walled bedrooms. Sing Britney Spears into hairbrushes in full-length mirrors. Sort stuffed animals in a row on cornflower blue bed sheets. They play house with baby dolls with broken eyes, and grocery store with miniature plastic freezers. Play hide and seek in walk-in closets, poke pale noses through sparkly pink clothes. They snoop into parents’ floral wall papered bedrooms just to say they’ve done it. Comb through hair products—sprays, gels, ties, bands—under bathroom sinks.

They pretend to be Argonauts, decipher maps on the spines of pinecones, construct slippery castles in the sandbox. Chafe soft hands along metal monkey bars. Dive like mermaids in above ground pools, splash and hide from horseflies, muffle shrieks under chlorinated water. They dry off in Snow White towels, leave puddles of soggy grass on ivory kitchen floors. Dress up in feather boas and sequined cowboy hats. Turn living rooms into fashion runways.

Young girls read Heartland books at the library, ask for horses for Christmas. Store marbles in mason jars just like their fathers. Throw dirty rocks into a shoebox, call it a collection. Paint tiny fingernails with glitter polish, smear thick gloss on slim lips. Chalk hopscotch on cement driveways, pedal bikes without training wheels. Draw MASH onto the backs of homework, tuck cat’s cradle yarn between fingers. Capture toads like fireflies in plastic containers, release them by the pond.

They talk about cooties, brag about families. Show off new plastic jewelry, Big Wheel bikes. Dare each other to ding dong ditch the neighbors, go into the cemetery and hold their breath. Wonder if brown eyes see the world the same as blue ones do. Wonder if they’ll still play when their families move cities apart. Make a pinky promise to be forever friends. Mean it.

Later, they smile if they see each other again, but fold the memories, tuck them away in available spaces within their bodies. Consider the pang in their sides when they pass.