

Who Can Make Tomorrow?

By Karel Murray

Listening to "The Candy Man" by Sammy Davis, Jr. from Willy Wonka and The Chocolate Factory really brings back memories of simpler times. I recall the film showing off brightly colored scenery and an elaborate wild eyed host (Gene Wilder as Willy Wonka) as he guides children and adults alike through his wondrous world of chocolate - promising everyone a future of delight and joy.

Here I sit . 48 years old, wondering how things have gotten so complicated. As a 10 year old kid, I remember hot mid summer afternoons where I and four other neighborhood friends sprawled out on the roof of an old shed in a rock quarry, dreaming up fantasies of wilderness, romance, and outrageous fun. These daydreams became more elaborate as time passed, while we constructed a new "tomorrow".

These adventures centered on a crumbled building. Huddled against a cliff loomed a partially decayed concrete wall and floor. The visual result of the disrepair left a distinct form of a magnificent, all powerful, throne. We aptly named it "The Giant's Chair" - a destination point for the childish troop. Our young minds created images of a man who stood three stories tall - someone worthy of occupying the chair.

As children do, we built a world of wonder and possibility. Each adventure scenario stretched our imagination and problem solving cunning. How would we feel if this enormous individual's attention was turned onto us and his intentions were not friendly? Elaborate strategies on where we would hide and how we could build engines of destruction to defeat the monstrous threat filled sheets of ruled note paper. Suddenly, the next day, the adventure would be altered - the huge man transformed into a prince of men, interested in only making our small world a better place to live. Five children became partners with this benevolent giant, intimately understanding that cooperation was the way both worlds could survive and thrive.

I wonder what The Giant Chair and its occupant really represent.

Psychologist might say that this was our childish way of dealing with authority - the almighty parental figure that dictating our whats, wheres and hows. You might wonder why did conflict, extreme sacrifice, fear, terror, sublime satisfaction, wonder and uncertainty continually appear in our childlike designed future. It's simple really. We created tomorrows that were fantastic, full of personal power, and choice. Even then, our brains and hearts needed to be challenged.

Then maturity creeps up and we file away and erase childish imaginings and yearnings. It's impractical to be a dreamer. But where has that left us?

You see, as we grow older, we learn that our tomorrows are already taken. We must be responsible! We need to work long hours to earn "enough" money. This in turn allows us to pay for food, shelter, education and a few trinkets as a small reward. Relaxing on

a weekend is nonexistent - transforming into a long list of chores; mow the lawn, clean the house, shop for groceries, pick up the dry cleaning, fix the errant household appliance, get the dog trimmed, and take the kids to their athletic activities. No time to breathe until after dinner when we stumble into the welcoming couch.

What we effectively do is replace our childhood imaginings with practical reality. And we wonder why we feel something is missing. You know the feeling - that spark of excitement and curiosity that leaps from nowhere when something catches your eye for absolutely no reason. You remain rooted in the spot and focus. The children voices recede for a moment as you search your mind for recognition. And then you find it. Yes. A sweet wondrous memory that plucks a bittersweet tang to your heart. What triggers this response is different for all of us. A song, a phrase, photograph, or the look of a small toddler stumbling after its mother. Just a whisper of memory you want to grasp tightly and not release again.

I got up early one morning (around 5:00 AM) and wandered out to my deck. There was a soft fog covering the ground and I could hear the creek behind our house tumbling down the slope. As my eyes adjusted to the dim light, I saw a mature, strong buck with a huge antler rack lift its head from the creek and survey the area. Standing to the deer's right, about 20 feet away, a large blue heron calmly rested on the hillside.

I held my breath. Together, just like at the Giant's Chair, we owned this small space of the world where magic, wonder and possibilities exist. Time stood still and I absorbed every moment of the peace and communion.

Find your moments of wonder and imagination, as "The Candy Man" song states:

Who can make tomorrow?
Dip it in a dream?
Separate the sorrow
And collect up all the cream?

I can and so can you...

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