

Preschool Days

My Preschool days took place inside a tiny two-story building located somewhere in Wausau, set on a little grassy hill enclosed by a white picket fence. Though I was but four and those memories are faint, I am able to recall several simple happy thoughts. Those were the days when we went to school late and came home early, and those were the days when everyday still felt like adventures and we were all Dora the Explorer. I remember warm spring afternoons, walking to the bus with Mommy or Daddy and Daddy lifting me onto the bus because I just wasn't tall enough. I also remember walking up our neighborhood street, hand in hand with Mommy and then crying because Daddy couldn't come. During those days, everything was just so simple, and all I knew were my parents, home and Preschool.

I had two best friends in Preschool. Their names were Pa Chee and Samantha. The sad thing about having a threesome was that someone would always have to sit alone on the bus. After a while we figured that if we took turns being alone, no one would be continuously left out. Perhaps some of our fondest memories happened right there during those bus rides. When Daddy hitched me onto the bus, Pa Chee and Samantha would already be there, waving at me to sit by them.

"It's your turn this time," Samantha would whine to Pa Chee. "I sat alone yesterday," and Pa Chee would crawl across the aisle and solemnly move into the next seat.

We always had little pictures and artwork to show each other, or trinkets like a new bead necklace our mothers had bought us. I remember trading our sisters' nail polish and Barbie lipsticks and running away when they asked about them. Samantha was a tricky bargainer. She always got the best of our trades and always outsmarted Pa Chee and me with her salesman talk.

"Hey, what about I give you two of my fuzzy pencils and you give me that bracelet?" Samantha would urge in her persuasive way.

Pa Chee and I would always turn to each other, just to see if we both thought this trade-off was absurd. Someway or another, one of us would agree. "Okay," Pa Chee would say. "But tomorrow if I don't want your pencils anymore, I get my bracelet back. And you have to give it back." Of course, then, that bracelet would never make it back anyhow.

One day, Samantha got me to trade the gold necklace my parents bought me. My mom was furious when I told her and became especially frustrated when she had to call Samantha's mother because she refused to give it back. I found out at that young age—gold necklaces are not to be compared with the funky, colorful beads you purchase at the store. Despite their dullness in design, they could be worth hundreds!

The three of us were just like all the little girls at that age. During play time, we occupied ourselves with plastic toys, scribbling on paper or giggling about small odd things. There was Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head, plastic fruits and vegetables for playing House, those baby dolls whose eyes kept closing when you laid them down, and yes—dress up gowns! Oh, how we loved those dress up gowns! I always wore the yellow one that looked like Belle's from *Beauty and the Beast*. Sometimes, the three of us, all dressed up in our princess outfits, would walk out of the little changing room and pretend to put toys away in front of the boys. They would laugh and tell us to go back on our side because at that age, "supposedly," boys were still dumb and girls still had

coodies. We each stayed on our own sides.

Another vivid memory that stuck in my mind from so many years before was the school yard. The landscape was a smooth grassy knoll surrounded by a row of trees and little pots of geraniums. Perched atop that hill like a stick in the ground, was our Preschool. I recall that in the springtime, that hill was lush with the greenest grass and everywhere you stepped, yellow dandelions dotted the ground. It was such a pretty contrast, the yellow on the green! I remember being quite perturbed when Miss Macky, my preschool teacher, told us dandelions were not really flowers, but weeds.

"Then why are they still so pretty though?" I asked in wonderment.

Miss Macky answered in her sweet way, "Weeds can still be pretty, Pang." So secretly, I told myself that I personally loved them anyways.

My friends and I would hop around, picking as many "weeds" as we could and occasionally, if we were lucky, some rare daisies for variety. Mrs. Yang, who was Miss Macky's assistance, would then braid our gatherings into pretty little garlands and tie up the ends so we could wear them on our heads. Unfortunately, I have not mastered the art of braiding dandelions still to this day.

Also during recess, when we were not badgering Mrs. Yang to braid for us, my friends and I would roll down the hill and race climbing up. When that didn't seem fun anymore, we would join the boys and play Girls Chase Boys, because the boys never wanted to do the chasing. It was always difficult for us to catch them and when we finally did, playtime would be over.

"Haha. Next time, losers!" the boys would say. And us, with our faces sweaty and hearts pounding, would snare at them and walk away. We'll get them next time.

Some kids never went to Preschool and went straight to Kindergarten the next year. At the time, I've always thought that was horrible, mainly because those students never got to meet Miss Macky. Now, looking twelve years back, I realize how much I miss Miss Macky and how much I yearn to revisit that Preschool. Most of all, I realized how extensively amazing my memory is. Preschool was a beautiful year, where silly childish mistakes, wetting your pants, and crying during nap time were all still okay.

Pang X.