

The human mind does not remember events in their entirety. It remembers moments. This is lost on many who treat memories as movies, when they are slideshows at best. We merely take these incongruent images and fill the gaps in hopes of making sense of them. It is for this reason, that I can not say that these events I relay to you are completely reliable in their actuality. All these years later I remember scant images: a cave, a waterfall, and that shade which my grandfather, on jovial days when his mind was sound, would refer to as a “fiendish flapdoodle.”

It was that time of year when the civilization of organized education has encroached upon the free wills of children, but they remain a dangerous combination of feral and melancholy. Longing for just another day of true freedom and anarchy, they are reprimanded and yelled at till Halloween, when they are permitted one final outburst against the constraints of the illogical society they were born into.

Being a rather meek and sickly child on the verge of teenage life, I found myself drawn heavily into the more wistful state of being. After school and on weekends, I would do my best to avoid nature at all costs. I wouldn't say that I was afraid of it, but it made me profoundly uncomfortable. Naked trees. The sound of their dead leaves scraping upon the sidewalk, seemingly of their own accord. The culmination of insects and wild animals, seeking any warmth they can find before the first frost. The odd fluctuation between dry heat and cold bursts of wind. It all made nature appear to me an uncaring destroyer.

However, my playmates next door, two brothers a year above and below my age, Skye and Adam, were drawn much more toward the brutality of nature. They were frequent guests, who wanted to make use of the pool I had in my backyard quite often. But given my predispositions, I found any excuse to avoid the pool, as I often had to clean out a variety of dead creatures from it. It wasn't uncommon at all to come across soaked fur corpses of skunks, rabbits, squirrels, opossums, or to a lesser extent occasional coyotes. The real problem, though, was unseen at first. It came from dealing with the filters to the pool, which would often become jammed with the leathery corpses of bloated frogs and lizards. No matter how much chlorine or acid I poured into that pool, I could not shake the idea that hundreds, if not thousands, of living creatures went into it only to never come out again.

Still, I wish I had just gone into the pool, for I now realize pools are the safest ways to pacify wild boys like Skye and Adam. And, my time inside the house left me looking like a more sickly child every day. Perhaps some sunlight on my fair skin would have done me well. Still, my parents became concerned that my avoidance of nature was causing irreversible damage to both my psyche and body. Thus, when it was proposed by my grandfather that myself and the two boys go spelunking with him in the abandoned mining shafts that littered the countryside, leftover from the days of gold rushing, my parents leapt at the idea.

Thus, instead of spending another weekend playing the likes of Donkey Kong Country, I found myself caught in a journey of betterment through adult guidance into the stoner labyrinths that