

Wilderness House Literary Review 5/2

Sabrina Stoessinger
Bored of Education

I think fences are stupid and I hate 'em. We never needed no fences around the school when I was little. Boys and girls played in the two-story log cabin built by Mr. Henson from across the road and on the teeter-totters that had old tires underneath so you wouldn't hurt your butt when the other kid jumped off and you were still way high up in the air and on the monkey bars with the peeling paint where everybody took turns to see who could hang upside-down the longest, even the girls who sometimes forgot they were wearing a dress but no kid was gonna tell 'cause if you had to go find the recess monitor she was already busy putting a band-aid on somebody or trying to get someone to stop crying and she'd just tell you to wait a goddamn second anyway did you think she was an octopus with eight arms? And by that time everybody was already racing out to the bush behind the school where the forts were that were made out of scraps of wood that Dad didn't notice were gone and they were gonna start playing war with swords and guns like the kind that guy used in that movie and if you didn't hurry up and get out there you'd be stuck in Teddy's fort and Teddy always wandered off in the middle of the war and fell in the creek and after lunch he'd have to do art in his gym clothes 'cause his school clothes had to hang over the heater to dry so he wouldn't get in trouble when he got home and this made the whole classroom stink like frogs and marsh marigolds and the green water at the edge of the creek.

I remember the first fence going up the year after Jimmy Cripp plowed into Miss Rundle's car and smashed it all up so that there were a million pieces of glass all over the school parking lot. After that lots of moms and dads came to meetings and drank coffee and ate cookies and told each other that something had to be done to protect all these kids here in case another idiot comes along and while we're at it Graham got a sliver in his finger from playing in Mr. Henson's log cabin and he had to go to the doctor to get it out 'cause it was so deep and somebody else said Chrissy is always peeing in the corner of the cabin and it's not ok 'cause of the germs even if it has a dirt floor and kids are gonna get sick and it's better if we have a fence around the yard so the kids are safe and protected and is someone gonna hurry up and tell Jimmy that we don't want him driving no more? Maybe we should just take the log cabin down 'cause someone's gonna get hurt climbing up that ladder anyway and it's only a matter of time before a kid breaks his friggin neck and maybe lets put up a fence around the creek too so Teddy stops falling in even though we all know he can swim real good.

Next thing you know this man in a suit came along with his clipboard and told all the teachers that he was from the Bored of Education and it was time to build a proper fence and get proper playground equipment instead of all this homemade junk that the old timers made for the kids, did we want everyone to think we were hillbillies, too poor to buy nice things? So the principal got some brand new metal poles that didn't have any paint on them in case it came off and we choked on it or rubbed it in our eyes and then took away most of the other stuff, even the log cabin that we asked if we could keep if we all promised to be really good and if we all made sure Chrissy wouldn't pee in there no more. We got to keep

Wilderness House Literary Review 5/2

the sandbox which was stupid 'cause nobody played in it except the kindergarteners and most of the time they didn't even play they just sat there and ate the sand and then they took down our old swings and put up two new ones which were too short to do under-ducks with and never went high enough to see over the school like the old ones did. Then more men came with great big trucks and we watched from the windows when they knocked down the fence and used rocks and cement to build a great big wall and we hoped we would be able to sneak over at recess to write our names and bad words with our fingers in the walls but Mrs. Holden said she knew exactly what we were up to and she wasn't going to let us ruin a brand new wall and no way were we allowed outside until everything was dry.

I'll never forget that morning when we got off the school bus and all the trees were gone and a bulldozer was sitting on the forts and I started crying and so did Danny and we ran to Mrs. Holden and asked her what happened to everything and she said that the Bored of Education man decided the bush was too dangerous for us kids and that there were animals living in there and who knew what the hell else and that it was just easier to get rid of everything and that all the grown-ups feel so much better now that all the boys and girls are safe.

Sabrina Stoessinger refuses to twitter and is allergic to tweets. She does, however, appreciate the number two, enjoy tweaking and eat Twix. Her fiction and poetry have been published in numerous journals, both online and in print, and her forthcoming work will be appearing in SmokeLong Quarterly. She will be guest-editing the Fall issue of White Rabbit Quarterly.