
ESSAYS/PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

The path

JAMES SHOKITE, R.N.

New England Home Care, Cromwell, Connecticut

(RECEIVED May 17, 2015; ACCEPTED May 30, 2015)

THE PATH

It was an earthen path that began at the end of a cul-de-sac and cut through a field of weeds and saplings adjacent to a small farm. It was simply known as "The Path." The path was made of sunbaked clay worn and grooved from foot traffic. The midday summer heat would rise from the clay path and stagnate midair, making it feel warmer than the rest of the field. The path was flanked on either side by a variety of milkweeds and wildflowers that seemed to reach to the sky. It was magical on a midsummer's day in the eyes of a young boy. In its glaring sunbaked splendor lounged a variety of insects, flying grasshoppers, dragonflies, and other crawling, buzzing, and hopping creatures. My favorites were the flying grasshoppers; they would spring from spot to spot as I interrupted their tranquil world of grasshopper meditation, or so it seemed. They could have been fornicating or preparing for mortal combat for all I knew, but for me it was just a magical place where they bathed in the sun. The milkweeds along the path were tall and quite often visited by elegant monarch butterflies. They would take flight as I approached and drift into the still summer air, doing a kind of navigational dance among the dragonflies,

grasshoppers, and other flying creatures. The dragonflies appeared to be much more aggressive and radical in their flight, with quick darting and changes of direction while all still dancing as if carefully choreographed to somehow magically avoid collisions. I have had a number of dreams, some as a child and now as an adult, involving that place in the field. In my dream, I am lying in a patch of flattened-out weeds beside the path and staring into a blue sky full of fluffy white clouds. Always the same dream: a big bright blue sky with fluffy white clouds. But I am terrified. I have this awful sensation of falling upward into the sky. I must hold onto the weeds so as not to fall up into the sky above me, looming like a giant desert threatening to swallow me up should I dare let go. I now look forward to the day I have that dream again. It has been a long time, and when I dream it again, I feel I will know it's my dream and not fear so much falling into the sky, and enjoy the thrill of such a sensation, knowing I am safe in a dream, a dream that has transported me back to a place in a time of sunbaked clay, grasshoppers, dragonflies, and the wonderful wide-eyed innocence of being so young and so fortunate to have a bug-filled clay path to explore on a midsummer's day.

Address correspondence and reprint requests to: James Shokite, New England Home Care. 136 Berlin Road, Cromwell, Connecticut 06416. E-mail: jamesshokite@gmail.com.