

# The Rights of the Innocent

I used to love Lego when I was younger. Assembling all the different parts to make jagged, jumbled buildings, then concocting various stories around my creation and the little blocky men and women that came with it. My little brother had yesterday, dragged out my old Lego set, dumped it all on the floor, scrambled it around a bit, then abandoned it in true childish fashion to go off in pursuit of some other game. I found myself looking down at it, remembering all the games that I used to make up in my head when I would play with these toys. Not long ago, I tried to play it with him and was saddened to find that I was having a lot of difficulty in getting into the game. In fact, I couldn't do it. I'm seventeen years old and somewhere along the years I seem to have lost my imagination.

My brother doesn't spend all his time playing imaginative games, mind you. I often catch him watching shows that really surpass his age group. He adores mature age video games such as "The Sims", where the little simulated beings regularly get their gear off and he's known about the birds and the bees since he was seven years old. I suppose it doesn't help having two siblings over the age of fifteen in the house but I'm sure the blame doesn't lie entirely with us.

When I was his age, the scariest thing I'd ever seen was "The Thing" from the Adams Family, who regularly haunted my dreams. The only computer game we had was the fairly harmless solitaire. "Shut up" and "Stupid" were considered profanities. And as far as I was concerned, I'd suddenly popped up out of the back garden amongst the carrots and potatoes. What's led to this sudden shift in society?

Of course you'll know of Peter Pan, the little boy who never wanted to grow up. All he had to do was sprinkle some fairy dust on him and fly away to a magical dream world, escaping from the bleak reality of the world he once resided in. Also, keep in mind that Peter Pan was based in the 1920s. He didn't have to deal with alcohol, drugs, sex, violent video games and worst of all, television. It seems that these days most children, instead of enjoying their childhood, are in a hurry to grow up and enter "the real world"; the scary world of our elders.

It's a very basic human right and perhaps that is the reason why it's often overlooked. I am talking, of course, of one's right to be a child. It seems to be a right that has little significance in modern society.

Seven thirty is the time that both Big Dog and Prime Possum, after their day's adventures, don their pyjama caps and skip off to bed. It is I guess a subtle hint that the television that is to follow over the course of the evening is not suitable for a younger viewing audience. In my family, we're lucky if we've had dinner before seven thirty, let alone having forced my brother to change into his night clothes, brush his teeth and physically be in bed. In many households both parents work, come home tired from the days activities, become busy with preparing dinners, cleaning, running baths or other evening chores and are unable to keep an eye on their children at all times. What's to say a child couldn't sit themselves in front of the television, reach for the control and with one click, open up for themselves a world of violence, hate, scorn and sex, simply from watching shows such as Big Brother, Desperate Housewives, The O.C or even just the evening news. As a society we do tend to preach on about the lack of

censoring in our world today, but it's funny how little is done to actually stop it. There was a time once, when if a kid was bored, they'd go outside and toss a basketball around, play with their dog or go for a bike ride. You walk down an average suburban street these days and yes there will be some kids out there tossing the footy around or playing tips on the front lawn. However, more and more are abandoning their tennis balls and footballs for game consoles.

My little brother is a basketball lover and plays for the local team. I find it a bit sad when I go to his games and see all the parents lined up along the court, getting more into the game than the players themselves. Many parents these days seem to feel that underneath their son or daughter's cute exterior is a child prodigy, ready to break free; all they need is a little yelling to prompt them. Losing is no longer acceptable, not only in sports but at school as well. More and more kids are being entered into coaching colleges by their parents, in a desperate effort to bring their child up to the "A" grade level. This can be seriously damaging to children with learning difficulties who, due to the difference from their grades to those of their peers, are led to believe they are unintelligent and inadequate. And this isn't just high school students, as now even primary school children are being categorized by their grades.

The adult world, as I myself have found, is not all rainbows and lollipops, unlike the world of a child. The world of a child is simple. You have your toys, you have your games. *Your imagination is your own. And you're always learning, always being influenced by things, events and people around you.* Why are we in such a rush to shed this magical existence? You're a child for such a small percentage of your life.

I think it's about time we were allowed to enjoy it.

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