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### *Stories*

Roger Galvez

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Left to my own devices I've come to realize I'm nothing but an overgrown child always trying to excuse myself of various obligations; leaving places without saying goodbye, riding my bike on the sidewalk, growing restless when in a place without somewhere to sit down or something to eat, exchanging rude gestures with kids in strollers while ignoring their parents' eye contact. Roger Galvez's series of 6 videos entitled *Stories* captures the essence of childhood; the freedom and restrictions, the varying confusions, myths, cruelties and delights. I've always loved home videos (my own and other people's equally), probably in part because while watching them I feel allowed to revel in certain sentimentalities that as an adult woman I should really be over by now. Through these shorts that Galvez narrates, he tells the stories of his childhood that were untold at the time of their happening. Recreating these home videos that never actually existed, he uses an old video camera, tapping into something far more emotional and less precise than high definition digital. Somehow the vagueness of fewer pixels is so much more appealing in creating a hazy nostalgia. Revisiting the places of his childhood, he filmed *Stories* mostly in and around his childhood home of Oakville, Ontario. His experiences of these places are told from his point of view, and probably offer a different story than that told by his parents or even siblings.

Think back on your own childhood, of all the memories not captured, the mythical places, the scrappy woods where parents didn't venture, that desperation for a specific toy you weren't allowed to have, Burger King garbage littering the playgrounds, mean brothers and sisters (unsure themselves of why they inflicted the kind of torture they did onto younger siblings), trying to figure out what swear words could be snuck into everyday vocabulary and which ones would land you a grounding. That specific kind of crudeness and lack of sensitivity that seemed to fester among kids who, at the same time, were trying to grow up and navigate a crueler and even less sensitive world. As Galvez recounts in his story *Apartment*, "We'd sit on our brown balcony yelling out to the town, trying to get the recognition we'd always been denied simply for being kids." *Stories* explores the tensions in growing up between restrictive 'because I said so' senseless rules, and the freedom that comes with being dismissed and ignored.

A friend recently wrote to me about her experiences at Canada's Wonderland and SeaWorld as a kid. She was thinking about these being the first experiences she had where she was in such close proximity to a lot of people. It was overwhelming and exciting to observe how other people functioned- or didn't function- in their familial units. She also mentioned the famous tragedy at SeaWorld where the whale Tilikum killed its trainer by dragging her under the water, and said something so succinct I've been

thinking about it ever since, that there was this “terrible reality layered with the promise of fun in these really extreme places.” So much of being a kid was like that! In Galvez’s story *Waterpark*, he reminisces about the thrill of going to the Wild Waterworks for the first time with his family, which was not an everyday activity because as he remembers, “the amusement of waterslides was reserved for the privileged kids in TV commercials as far as I knew, but there must have been a sale on tickets or God existed for a minute long enough to bless my family with a set because we were going.” So extreme were the feelings of excitement that he HAD to be the first one lining up in order to get as many precious minutes of waterslide joy as possible, meaning he HAD to hold the car handle in preparation of opening the door, and just HAD to jump out of the car too early...and in a sick twist of irony he HAD to end up with horrible skinned knees, unable to ride the slides.

Galvez also delves into the mysterious world of religion in his story *Church*, describing his two years working as an altar boy. The mystifying Christian and Catholic rituals of ‘eating of the body, drinking of the blood’ for communion was equal parts thrilling and terrifying as a kid. Thrilling because, come on, snacks in Church! Terrifying because it was supposed to symbolize Christ’s long dead body, which seemed more aligned with a horror movie than a reasonable adult belief that would make you into a better person. Later, after realizing that “there was no pay, except the salvation of one’s soul, but no stores took Divine Credit and we were supposed to want to be there anyway”, Galvez describes leaving the church with no notice, and taking away from his experience little more than a palpable fear of God. I had a similar experience, having been wholly convinced of the terrors of hell and eternal damnation when, helping to teach Sunday School, I grew increasingly suspicious and sullen when confronted with the overwhelming evidence that this ‘unconditional love’ that was promised really did come with quite a few conditions.

Watching these six stories of Galvez’s childhood memories play out on an old Sony TV (exactly the kind I remember receiving with absolute joy because my family had finally become normal and got the right kind of brand name electronics for once) while reclining on an overstuffed loveseat, belonging to Roger’s parents, I am flooded with feelings of loss as well as a yearning for unmapped and uncharted childhood experiences. Growing up and becoming disillusioned is not exactly something parents wish to capture in their kids faces in treasured home videos, but Galvez’s treatment of his own disillusionment tempered with time and distance is hilarious, touching and relatable.

- Alicia Nauta