

# The Muddy Rope Swing

C'mon. Come on. Recess is about to start. My friends and I have wolfed down lunch so fast it's a wonder we didn't choke. Now at our desks, we sit coiled up ready to spring at the bell. The ringing starts and so do we. We set off at a rapid pace—not running: no running in school. We come to the door. In the kid-jam of break time, we're pushing and shoving to attain the stairs. We're out. We tear through tetherball, thunder across the soccer game and descend the embankment to reach the swing. No. Not the swing at just any playground. This is the rope swing, caked with mud from our grubby hands gripping the twine so we don't tumble down below. Underneath lays mud in which we encrust our hands.

Today is a great day, not hot after the rain. The mud is especially gooey and the nearest teacher is the one that doesn't mind us playing here. More often than not a teacher will come over and we'll hide because we're not on school property. However, this teacher lets us, so our stick and twig forts remain unused for now. In the group we all take turns as we fall in the gunk and laugh. The bell goes again and we head in, not stampeding; instead I wobble and wander through the wet field, my feet slurping like suction cups as I head towards the less enthusiastic jam of kids.

This morning we stole sticks from a neighbouring stronghold to add to our own—we even managed to take a big branch. Now lunch has been shot down into our intestines as we sit, like cannon balls, our chairs the canons. A fuse would be the clock slowly burning away in sync with time. The bell, the canon fires, the sound rings through the school—an odd sounding canon; it's less of a BOOM and more of a DING DING DING but... it'll do. Recess starts. My friends and I race to the swing.

I play for a bit, and then I spot a teacher. "Teacher!" I yell, because I'm the lookout. We run below the teacher's line of vision. We hide in our forts--the ones we work on every morning—and wait for the teacher to come. I stay as still as I can while the teacher searches from afar for kids in the forest. Nothing for them. My friends and I managed once again to stay still and steady enough to escape the teacher. I wait with my friends for the teacher to be far enough away and we leave our not-so-secret-but-effective hiding place. Just as the bell sounds.

I sit at my desk. The bell rang already but it's an inside recess so I'm envying

tomorrow. I watch as the majority of the class mess about playing inside tag. They whack books, sending them carelessly crashing to the floor. They hide behind desks, accidentally towing them over the floor as they take off. I opt to join in. The little kids in the kindergarten class across from us watch as we play and wish they could play like us, but they are under supervision. The tone-deaf bell sings its tone-deaf tune, and we trip over ourselves to get the class in order before it's too late. The last of us plop down on our cold plastic seats the last second before Mme Cloutier meanders in. We're perfect. So much she has to think we haven't moved all lunch! Oh well, this recess wasn't one swinging upon the rope swing, but it was still fun. And tomorrow is going to be great.

"That was close," I state.

"Ya, too close. If I hadn't managed to fall on the grass, my mom would have killed me," he jokes. "It's still my turn." My friend mounts the super swing, and slips. He manages to land on his feet, only to lose his footing and stumble forwards, muddying himself. He's not happy to say the least, and I along with the rest of my friends try so hard not to laugh. But I honestly feel sorry for him.

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The year finished in this fashion. I had fun but in the summer we moved. We moved far away, very far away, too far away. We moved across the country from one coast to the other. It wasn't as much fun. I had a hard time fitting in. The surroundings were rough. The people were more so. Coming from a small sheltered town, knowing nothing else, I didn't adapt. I couldn't change to such an extent. I ended up making friends. Two. Two friends, one from school, the other from sports. It took too long to buddy up so I was lonely. I had lingering attachments to my old town, my old school, and my old friends. Mostly I longed for the messy and muddy lunch-hours spent with my friends on the rope swing. That rope swing I now appreciate more than ever.