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Daydreaming

I've spent a significant amount of time in my life daydreaming. I don't care to try to estimate exactly what percentage of my time I've devoted to daydreaming, but it is a pleasant occupation, and, I think, a useful way to spend part of the time. Although in my childhood daydreaming was perhaps best done on a warm, sunny spring day through an open schoolroom window, there are really no requirements for the physical setting. Any criterion I try to establish seems to have enough exceptions to eliminate it as a requirement. Physical and psychological euphoria would appear at first blush to be necessary until I think of the number of times I've overcome discomfort in both areas by falling into the kind of reverie I call daydreaming. To return to the schoolroom reference, I'm sure I survived several uncomfortable class sessions by blissful attempts at identification of cloud formations through slightly unfocused eyes or by dreamily constructing after-school activities for the teacher. Did Mrs. Brown stroke her white cat while she searched the *Dallas Morning News* for typographical errors? Did Miss Walters work word problems while she ate her salad at dinner? Did Dovie Lu Bullion brush her long blonde hair one hundred strokes and arrange it in intriguing new shapes in her pink and white bedroom? You get the idea. Those were my favorite teachers, but even they weren't always at their best. When a teacher was at her dullest, I found it profitable to speculate about a possible richer personal life for her without really having any facts on which to base my speculations.

Daydreaming transcends boring situations. One of my longest-continuing daydreams concerns leading a girl from the past through the intricacies of modern life. I've never discovered her name and she's had any number of guises. Actually, I know almost nothing about her except the approximate time during which she lived and her willingness to go along with me in experiences new to her. Her contribution to my life began with my fascination with the tales Daddy told about his boyhood at the turn of the century on a farm in north central Texas. His stories were usually set outdoors, usually at night around a campfire. When one of his stories became familiar through repetition, I would frequently wonder about other aspects of life back at the farm house when he was a boy. I invented a shadowy girl my age who might have lived there. I would borrow her to take her through one of my routine days.

She would be impressed by the semi-weekly delivery of milk in glass quart bottles. She would be as fascinated as I by the remarkable memory of the horse which drew the square white Metzger's milk wagon, stopping at all the right houses without any apparent direction from the milkman. She would also be astonished by the wall switch which quickly flooded my bedroom with light at night. I would take her on her first streetcar ride to the library down town, where we'd climb the marble steps to the second-floor children's shelves and gather our five-book quota for the week.

Going up the steps I'd take her hand so that she wouldn't be frightened, as I had once been, by the elaborate see-through wrought-iron risers that permitted a panoramic view of the mysterious downstairs adult library far below. I'd hold her hand, too, as we crossed the

busy city streets on the three-block trek back to the streetcar line which would take us back down Elm Street to Main Street and so home. She would be dazzled by the traffic lights which permitted us safe passage across the streets.

As the years passed and I learned more about the past, especially colonial days in this country, I would adopt a girl from that age and introduce her to whatever wonders I was concerned about in the twentieth century. *She* might help *me* with my knitting, but I could show her how to use an electric sewing machine. She would be embarrassed to wear my knee-length school dresses instead of her usual ankle-length clothes, but she would be delighted with patent leather shoes, especially the Roman sandals I wore to church in the spring.

I still associate with that colonial girl, now a woman. She accompanies me on occasional errands about town, bewildered by the passing cars and the speed with which we travel down the toll road. She wonders about my impatience when I venture down Midlothian Turnpike during the noon rush hour, slowly but still faster than she could have walked the same distance. We have no difficulty communicating despite the changes our language has undergone in three or four hundred years, depending on which era I borrow her from. I realize that I control this recurrent daydream so that I can cope with the traffic and the routine boredom of getting about the city. I never invite her along when I'm looking for a new location in town. I don't need her comments as I maneuver strange streets, neither do I need her company when I'm venturing forth to the classes I enjoy so much. At those times I want to concentrate entirely on the present. But she's a wonderful friend who helps me control the everyday boredom of routine nineties living and appreciate the convenience of modern life. Daydreaming still adds spice to potential boredom.