

## ALL SHAPES AND GUISES

Super-power comes in different guises, or as my grandmother would say, 'all shapes and guises.'

This philosophical enlightenment took place in the late 70s. I was starting to move away from the school playground games, preferring to open books or hold discussions with those fellow students who held similar interests. To be honest, these students numbered but three, but nonetheless eyes were widened and so were our minds to the wonders of literature, of nature, of possibilities, of life.

During summer school holidays it was not uncommon to find me in the countryside under a tree with a book. You could say it was a form of escape from the trials of homelife. Whilst I may have been physically alone, I wasn't alone. All around, my senses worked overtime.

I would always choose a vantage point whereby I could see a canvas of bright and light, a celebrated kaleidoscope of bursting colour, a folding and fusing vista, a place where nature would not be disturbed going about its daily work whilst I invaded its space.

My chosen tree provided shade and occasional shelter from the warm summer rain; but it was more than that. A summer breeze would hold a conversation with the leaves and branches, and birdsong – the Green Woodpecker in particular, would compose a symphony conducting Jays and Jackdaws. If my station was under a tree close to a house or in a formal garden, the joy of hearing Robins in the tendered hedgerow was intertwined with the occasional marauding pheasant foraging and keeping away from the shooting rights. Swallows would swoop and dive in and out of the wheatfields and I am sure the poppy seeds were scattering in the breeze and coming to rest in the soil to grow tall the following summer.

Toward late August, the blackberries and raspberries in those same hedgerows would be an absolute bounty for birds and me – I can still taste my grandmother's crumble and pies.

So, what was in my backpack? A bottle of cordial mixed with water, advised to remain upright to avoid spillage on the bicycle ride; two rounds of corned beef sandwiches, two packets of crisps, two apples and a banana if I was lucky. And of course, my chosen reads and a notebook and pencils. A few scribbles have survived from those days that have woven into my poems and the odd short story. It was not unusual to spend at least six hours under the tree – I confess to the odd afternoon snooze!

Back in the late 70s and early 80s I remember the summers being fairly settled and we would speak of 'glorious summers' or 'golden summers' – perhaps in homage to our Enid Blyton books? The magic figure of summer comfort was 77 degrees Fahrenheit, 25 degrees centigrade in modern money!

Super-power does come in all shapes and guises (smiling face and thumbs up to my grandmother).