

Sandcastles: A Children's Story for Grownups

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Dedicated to the Woman and Victory

. . . Aerial perspective of house on block and rising sun

In a city not very far away and a time not very many years ago, there lived a very special boy named Aaron.

Aaron lived in a square bedroom, in a square house, on a square block in the city. Aaron's bedroom was in the southwest corner of the house, and the house was on the southwest corner of the block. Each morning when Aaron would prepare for school, he would take a few minutes to look out the south window in his bedroom to watch the sun begin to rise in the east. Aaron could do his best with the window open, but sometimes his mom would scold him for opening the window, so he didn't do that very often. Out the other window in his room, which faced west, Aaron could watch the sun set, and usually after he ate dinner at the square dinner table in the square kitchen of the square house, he would watch the sun set.

*. . . Aaron in window watching the sunset with a **ONE WAY** sign in foreground*

The window that Aaron would watch the sun rise through was on a street where the cars would travel in both directions, up and down the street. The other window where Aaron would watch the sun set through was on a street that the cars would only travel in one direction. And to Aaron, it was as if the grown up people, like his mom and dad, had learned a lesson from the sun and knew that sometimes in life you should only travel in one direction, one way.

Sometimes his mom would ask Aaron why he loved to watch the sun rise and set, but he didn't know how to explain to her the special things that he could only learn when he watched

the sun's glowing round globe low in the sky, through his square window, from his square house, at sunrise and sunset.

. . . collage of Aaron and his friends playing

In the house next door to Aaron lived a pretty girl named Evie. Evie had curly hair that always had a pretty bow in it, and she always wore pretty dresses. Evie was in the same school class with Aaron, but Aaron was not as popular as Evie since somehow his jeans would always have paint or paste on them and somehow Aaron could never quite explain himself to his classmates or teacher.

After school and sometimes on weekends, Aaron would play in Evie's backyard in her sandbox. Aaron like to do this since one of his favorite things was to build sandcastles. At this, he was very good, and hardly any of his friends could build a sandcastle higher or better than Aaron. Sometimes Evie would even play in the sandbox with Aaron, but not usually since this would mess up Evie's dress. On those special occasions when Evie would play in the sandbox, Aaron would build the very best sandcastles that he could.

On the weekends, Aaron's dad would play ball with him in their backyard. Sometimes, Aaron's friends, including his very best friend, Jimmy, would play, too. Aaron like playing ball, but his favorite thing was to play in his treehouse.

In his backyard, there was a big oak tree, and in it, Aaron had built a fine treehouse with play cops and robbers or army stuff, but his favorite thing was to sit alone after dinner and look out the square window of the square treehouse, which faced west and watch the sun go down.

. . . Aaron high in the air looking down at squares (city blocks) below, stars around him and the sun in his right hand

One night, while he slept, Aaron dreamed of Evie and his friends. And in the dream, his friends were playing with baseballs and basketballs. They laughed and called to Aaron, but while his friends played, he only sat in the sandbox—for a while making a sandcastle and, then, for a while looking from above in the treehouse. And in the dream, Aaron was lifted up from his bed and went through the window which faced west and was carried up into the sky, higher and higher, until he could see the sun, which had already set, beginning to set again.

Swirling around him, he saw all the balls that all the games were played with, the baseballs, basketballs, footballs, even wheels from the cars that drove by Aaron's bedroom windows. All these balls continued higher and grew smaller above him. But as they went higher and higher, they also began to glow and became brighter and brighter. Suddenly, Aaron realized that all the swirling, twinkling stars above him were the many round things which all the games and all the future was made of. As Aaron looked below him, he saw the square block that he lived on and the square house that he lived in and the glowing round globe of the sun beginning to set. And Aaron understood that these were the things that made up his family and friends and also made up the present and the past of his life. But the sun began to set, and as Aaron watched it slide lower and lower on the horizon, he was again filled with wonderment and love for the huge glowing globe of the sun.

. . . collage of Aaron smiling with Cindy and friends and, head down, sad with Rick

At school, Aaron enjoyed his friends and the things that he learned. Sometimes, Aaron would help his friends with their homework. Aaron was very good at his ABC's and making

things with clay. Aaron regularly helped one little girl named Cindy with her spelling. Cindy was shy, and she wasn't as popular as Evie since her legs were much too long and she never wore ribbons in her hair. Aaron's friends liked him very much, but as always in life, sometimes there were those who, for their own mysterious reasons, decided not to like Aaron.

One of Aaron's favorite friends at school was the nice lady who worked in the cafeteria. Often, she would save a special treat for Aaron at lunchtime. Sometimes, she would even have Aaron's favorite treat, chocolate cake.

One day, as Aaron sat eating lunch, a boy named Rick came by his table and made fun because Aaron was the only one with the special dessert. Rick laughed to another boy he was with that Aaron always had to be different. Aaron felt bothered by this because he had never wanted to be different; he just wanted to be friends.

. . . Aaron in sandbox with demolished castle and Evie standing over him with her hand on hips

Later that afternoon, after school, Aaron stopped by Evie's to play in her sandbox. That day, Aaron decided to build the very best sandcastle. Aaron used his best round bucket and his biggest square shovel. Aaron was especially happy because, that day, Evie decided to play in the sandbox with him. As Aaron worked, Evie watched intently, and once, she even helped by bringing a bucket of water.

Just as Aaron was patting the last bit of sand in place on the last spire of the castle, Evie picked up the big square shovel and began to knock down the castle. Aaron screamed at Evie to stop, but she laughed and tore it all the way down. Aaron stopped screaming, looked up at Evie very calmly and asked her, "Why did you tear down my sandcastle?"

Evie stood up, brushed herself off, looked down at Aaron and said, “Because your sandcastle isn’t good enough to be in my sandbox.”

. . . collage with Aaron at dinner with his mom and dad and sitting with his grandmother as she looks him right in the eye

At dinner that evening, Aaron wasn’t very hungry. Instead, he sat quietly and piled his mashed potatoes higher and higher. Soon, Aaron had the highest pile he had ever made. His dad looked at him as he worked on his plate and said, “Don’t do that, Son.”

Aaron’s mother looked at him and asked, “Aaron, why are you doing that?”

Aaron shrugged his shoulders, excused himself, and went to his room. And as he usually did about that time each night, he sat at the square window of his square room and watched the vivid, glowing globe of the sunset.

That night, Aaron sat with his grandmother while she read to him. Aaron’s grandmother was very special to him. She was the one Aaron could talk to the best. That night, she read about the special man who lived a long, long time ago and how he had been betrayed by his friends, and finally, he died. Aaron wondered how a man, who loved people so much and had done such special things could have been hated so much. Aaron asked his grandmother why people would tear down something that someone else had made. His grandmother smiled her grandmother smile and told Aaron that people could do many bad things for many reasons. Aaron asked her if they would do bad things because maybe the thing the person built wasn’t good enough for the other person. His grandmother laughed her grandmother laugh and told Aaron that she was sure that would never be the reason.

“Then, why do people say and do mean things?” asked Aaron.

She raised Aaron's chin and looked him right in the eye and said, "Always remember—the way someone treats you is always the way they treat others. It's not what you've done; it's what others won't do."

Aaron thought for a moment and asked if his grandmother felt that people who blamed others could ever learn to be different.

She smiled again and said, "Only if someone very special does very special things to change those people."

Aaron kissed his grandmother goodnight and went to bed.

... lamb speaking to lion and bear in five-sided grassland field

That night, as Aaron lay in bed, he thought about Evie and Rick and the things that his grandmother had said. As Aaron fell asleep, he began to dream a strange dream. A gentle lamb was being chased by a lion and a bear through a strangely-shaped field that was not square but had one extra corner. The lamb ran until it became exhausted and collapsed.

As the lion and the bear surrounded the lamb, the lamb began to speak. "Why must you kill me?"

"You're a lamb, and I'm a bear."

"Speak for yourself," said the lion. "I'm going to kill you because you're weak and deserve to die."

"Before you kill me, let me ask you both one question," said the lamb. "Bear, you say you must kill me because it's in your nature, and you, Lion, say you must kill me because I'm weak. Bear, you are a creature of the woods and the wilderness. You sleep for half the year in the bosom of the forest, and you fish the endless brooks and streams of the mountains. Why, then,

must you kill a harmless creature who does no more than graze the pastures well beyond your domain?”

The bear shrugged his huge shoulders and said, “Yes, that is all true, but I am still a bear, and you are still a lamb.”

“Lion,” said the lamb, “you say I am weak. Are not your lion cubs innocent, soft, and weak, also? Would you kill them for being lion cubs?”

The lion pawed the ground and tossed his great hairy mane to and fro; then he became very quiet and said, “Yes, that is true, but I am a lion, and you are a lamb.”

The lamb shook his head slowly back and forth and spoke very softly, “Bear, you have found an excuse to do something that is easy to do but not necessary. Lion, you have found a lie that allows you to blame others rather than yourself. I know now that you must kill me and I must let you, but I want you to know one last thing: It is more important to me that you understand the truth of what you have said than what you are about to do to me.”

Then, the bear and the lion slew the lamb.

. . . Aaron towering over Evie with strong, brave eyes

One weekend afternoon, Aaron had two of his school friends, Jimmy and Cindy, over to his house to play. For a while, they rode their bikes, and Jimmy and Cindy giggled to one another, for they knew Aaron’s funny little secret. Aaron would always ride his bike only in the direction of the ONE WAY arrow on the street in front of his house. He’d walk his bike back down the street to his house or ride all the way around the square block. As Aaron was walking his bike back along the ONE WAY street, Jimmy and Cindy rode ahead.

Just as Aaron was in front of Evie's house, which was next door to his, Evie and Rick and some other little boys and girls started laughing and making fun of Aaron. "What's wrong, Aaron, got a broken leg?" one little boy asked.

"Oh, no," said Rick, "Aaron always has to be different."

Aaron decided to just ignore them and hurry home to catch up with his friends. But just at that moment, Evie jeered to all her friends, "No, I know why Aaron is walking back home. Because he's too tired. Aaron never finishes anything."

At that, Aaron sat his bike down and walked up to Evie and said, "Evie, you may be popular with some people, but as time goes on, you're going to find that those people aren't really your friends at all."

"Oh, is that right?" said Evie. "Well, what makes you so smart, Aaron?"

"Because I've always been your friend, and if this is how you treat them, you'll never have very many. Starting with me."

With that, Aaron spun around, picked up his bike, and continued back to his good friends, Jimmy and Cindy.

... Aaron and Cindy working on sandcastle, with the flag made from her bow crowning the castle

Later that day, Jimmy had to leave early, so Cindy and Aaron went over to her house, which was just a few houses away, to play in Cindy's sandbox. Aaron worked and worked on the biggest and best sandcastle he ever built. Cindy pushed up large mounds of sand for Aaron to form the high spires of his masterpiece, and she brought many buckets of water, too. As Aaron patted the last bit of sand on the highest spire, Cindy took a bow out of her hair, a bow Aaron

had never seen her wear before. She took a small stick and, with the bow, made a flag to place in the highest spire of Aaron's castle. Aaron was very surprised and said he was very thankful for the crowning touch on the castle. Cindy said that she hoped he would always come back and build castles in her sandbox.

Aaron raised her chin, looked her right in the eyes, and said, "Cindy, I'll always be your friend."

With that, Aaron remembered that his mother had made his favorite treat that day, chocolate cake. So he invited Cindy to come over and have some. They ran off to Aaron's house, and the memory of that day remained with Aaron for a long, long time.

. . . collage of Aaron looking at the sunrise and the eagle peering down upon the lamb, lion, and bear

Many years later, when Aaron had grown to manhood, he worked in a very large building that was not square but had one extra corner. Aaron's job was a very important one; only he was entrusted with certain knowledge and certain plans that could mean the difference between victory and defeat.

The day came that Aaron was given a very important job. In his square office, by his square window which faced east, he sat for some time and thought of the important things that were happening around him. Aaron remembered Evie and Cindy and his mom and dad and his grandmother. Aaron worked all night in his office complete his plans.

Very early in the morning, Aaron laid his head down on his desk to rest his eyes. As he did, he fell asleep and began to dream. In the dream, Aaron saw a beautiful eagle soaring higher and higher in the sky. As the eagle peered down, beneath him he saw the bear and the lion which

were about to pounce upon the lamb. As the eagle soared still higher, it flew so close to the burning globe of the sun its huge, richly-feathered wings became transparent in the light, and the eagle knew that it must swoop down and somehow save the lamb. As the eagle's wings made their great turn towards their destiny that awaited below, three of their feathers touched the sun and were burned completely. The eagle, undaunted, made its dive at lightning speed to ward off the attackers.

Suddenly, Aaron awoke as the first rays of the morning sun burst over the horizon and into his eyes. He stood up, and with the knowledge of what he must do, the messenger with the eye of the eagle went forth to complete his destiny and to victory.