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Fr. Wr. 234-4  
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It was a lovely spring day. We had deliberately cut across the large empty lot on the edge of town, for the sun was burning the clouds out of the sky and the trees promised some shade. We tramped through the dry remnants of last year's crop of weeds-- the bare stalks pitched at irregular angles--and crossed a little clearing that sloped down to a pond in the center of the field. It was a poor excuse for a pond--more mud than water--but it was surrounded by shade trees, rustling in the early afternoon breeze. And we wanted the shade.

In front of us and a little to one side of the clearing the ground fell off into a small depression. From where we stood it looked like a shallow, oblong-shaped pit. I walked over and kicked at the upper edge of it, and watched as the loose dirt tumbled down to the bottom.

"Bet you don't know what this is," Pete said as he leaned against a soft maple.

No, I had to admit that I did not.

"Why, it's a fort," he asserted. "Many's the one I've dug." Then he added as an afterthought, "Full afternoon's work for three kids."

Of course. He was right. I should have known. We had left the world of reality behind us when we stepped into the field. We had entered into an even more real world of magic and imagination.

"Hey, Mikie!"

We started as a juvenile voice overhead in the branches of a tree broke the quiet.

"Yea," another voice replied from the thicket to our left.

"It's morning now," the first voice continued, "and you're gonna try to get away."

If that had been an adult, I thought to myself, he would have said, "Let's pretend that it's morning now." But a grown-up would have forgotten that this was a magic place. There was no need to pretend here. If Joey or Mikie said that it was morning, why, it was morning (until someone decided that it was afternoon). Children do not pretend. The world of imagination is too real for pretense.

I turned and kicked at the edge of the fort. Squinting into the sun, we stared across the field. Heaven only knows what dangers lurked on the edge of the pond or over in the clump of maples, especially where the shadows were blackest. Scouts may have reported signs of Indians or buffalo or robbers. At any rate, the fort was built post-haste.

Whoever said that reminiscence is solely a function of old age was sadly mistaken. The urge to dream in retrospect is very much a part of all of us.

I remember when I was Robin Hood and I had the Sheriff of Nottingham cornered in a closet. I suppose that if some wise grown-up had seen me then, he would have said, "Don't be silly, little boy. There's no one in that closet." But he would have been wrong as he could be. The Sheriff of Nottingham was wherever

I  
I wanted him to be

I can remember driving the long, over-stuffed sofa as a trolley car, using a meat-grinder that substituted admirably for the trolley's controls. We children had not learned that a meat grinder ground meat and did not drive a trolley. But to us the distinction was unimportant.

We walked on across the field and back into the hot sun.

It is not very often that I stand in magic places any more. At least not since some grown-up told me that the real child's world is less real than the adult world around me. Of course I believed him--though I doubt him now--and the real world of imagination tumbled around my ears. Once in a while I scratch among the crumbled ruins of that world to find reality again. But somehow the spell has left me, and I never can quite recover the wonder, try as I may.

Who knows but that the child's world is the real world after all?