

When Robin sings here I close my eyes, no longer on a hillside in Vermont but sitting on my front porch, t-shirt sticking to my back with smoke from Mother's cigarette wafting in the breeze. Home is marked by extraordinary little things. This could be your childhood home; thyme tucked into and flowing down steps, a house pressed back into a gingerbread tree line neat and tidy. It could be your home. It could be mine. But this is Robin's home too.

Spruce tree stands sentinel in the middle of the lawn, home base during kickball hours. Norway Maple hears us yell, "Olly oxen free!" Below, that dappled lane would have been our raceway once the training wheels were kicked off, whether on this Vermont path or my own alley. But this is also the Maple's home.

As children we sat in front yards, grass tickling the backs of our legs while we watched Bees and stole their White Clover to decorate our arms and necks or ring our heads as crowns. We were invincible in our yards; kings and queens of our neighborhoods. A wooden fence became a kingdom boundary or the OK Corral when warring with neighbor kids depending on our moods and the onset of dark. Bees call this **their** home too. Riches of up to 500 pounds of honey flow from an acre of our jewelry; yet seven among their ranks now call the Species of Concern list **their** home. How long will this be their home? How long will we watch Bees dancing in the space above the lawn like peppercorns?

No matter my home didn't gaze, like this hill, onto mountains or hold Wild Geraniums and Cattails as courtly decorations. We had Queen Anne's Lace lining our fences and brightening our corners. You and I could have shared secrets over red popsicles on **this** wooden porch with our massive White Oak guard. We could have plotted out our futures and saved the world with the giant tree shielding us and hundreds of species of Butterfly and Moth Caterpillars.

Home follows you, not like a shadow disappearing in the forest, but like the soles of your feet, sticking with you, supporting you in new terrain. We humans value home – even when we're far from our place of birth. Memories of there are reflected here. We sometimes value home to extreme – refusing to flee rising flood waters or rebuilding repeatedly on the same plot after hurricanes. We are stalwart in our staying power yet we destroy our neighbor's homes – Bees, Caterpillars and Birds – without a backward glance; in pursuit of **more** homes, new and bigger homes. Unlike us, Caterpillars cannot build a new Oak tree. Their pollinating future selves are doomed without their leafy feeding grounds. Bees produce no honey from asphalt. "There's plenty for the bees," we protest; but numbers don't lie.

These small neighbors create the foundation for our homes. By pollination alone they help ninety of every hundred flowers reproduce and feed us a third of our food. They also feed our neighbors Robin and Caterpillar. And what is a world without neighbors? It's no home at all. Home is marked by extraordinary little things.