

I. Tarzan

Once upon a time in the suburbs the ten year olds crouched in their bedrooms watching The X-Games. As their cereals got soggy in their bowls, a blur of black and khaki spun and landed in a splash of angular knees and elbows. Every kid watching understood they'd seen something historic. When the person, who they all knew now was named Tony Hawk, was swallowed in the arms of his competitors and rose again surfing the hands of his tribesmen, there was no doubt that whatever this was was special. (Behind this scene were posters advertising the animated Tarzan, the Disney take on the tale of a feral child brought to account for his adopted barbarism by the reappearance of those that abandoned him at the beginning.) In the brief black millisecond before commercial break, some kids saw in that reflection their old world suddenly curved and ramped around them. They'd remember to ask their parents for a skateboard the next morning.

II. Monkeys

"We used to do it barefoot." An old man walking out of the Bible store in boat shoes started telling the kids, who were busy clicking their boards against the parking lot pavement. This was the outer edge of their childhood, an expanse of asphalt that stretched around the shopping center just outside their neighborhood. "We'd use our toes to grip the board to bring it up off the ground." But this was back before boomboxes and Bill Clinton, back when they called it sidewalk surfing, handstands on metal wheels and all that. Eventually one kid would bark that they were trying something called an ollie, not some sort of monkey hop, so the old man and his wife would shrug into their Cadillac and drive off, leaving two more painted lines free for the kids to try and jump.

III. Magic

One day an older kid would come out from the Chinese Restaurant, light a cigarette, and coolly ask to try a trick on someone's board. His clothes had holes in all the right places, and his shoes looked like they were armored, so no one could say no. When he jumped the board did a full flip beneath him. It was like something from the magazines, but they saw it happen right before them. One kid got the courage to ask How, but the Cool Kid just laughed and said it was magic, before disappearing across the traffic bustling beyond the lot. A new field of study was now available. But only through persistent experimentation

would the alchemist's formula reveal itself. In testing variable and varials, they learned that it would take at least a million explosions to manage the magic. But what else was there to do in this endless summer of their lives?

IV. History

With the opening of a bookstore, they discovered there were magazines all about this special sorcery. A brave kid would sneak in and slip the latest issues halfway down their pants and cinch their belt to hold it securely against their skin; the sacred texts could then be shuttled out beneath a salt-stained t-shirt. Outside on the curb the kids would all huddle together, heads bowed in the blazing sun, constructing a shadowed mythos out of those stolen pages. Like little monks they interpreted manifestations of the divine, established saints and apostles, and catalogued sins. Stitched together with bright patches of imaginative invention, an epic oral history came into being. New philosophies appeared, the dialectics of destruction and creation were debated, and old terms like impossible took on new meaning. The infrastructure of the city suddenly became holy too. The cul-de-sacs and driveways, the parking lots and painted curbs, the steps and handicap ramps, those structures of civilization, were all for them. Black rainbows on walls and red streaks on handrails revealed this secret world within the world. Everything belonged to this cabal of noble savages.

V. Soma

A lifetime later, in some alley in Brooklyn or Barcelona or Belarus, a skater will run their callused fingers across their shins, feeling the ghosts of old scars amidst freshly crusted scabs and still-oozing pocks. The body as perpetual palimpsest, the living testament to their powers. Sensations take circuitous routes through our central nervous system before we can make sense of them. Touch first travels through the amygdala and hippocampus, those parts of the brain that hold our memory and emotion. And there is the imbalanced equation of nostalgia, a painful coming home to all the possibilities that we've failed to conjure. But our summer isn't over as long as the body can heal. Back in the blank expanse of innocence, at the end of our eternal childhood, in parking lots without people, everything imaginable is ours forevermore.