

Roasting Marshmallows

We planned for adventures, trips -- anything that would produce memories fond enough to get us through the daunting new chapter ahead. That was, until the emergence of the bat-borne virus that stole our freedom. The pandemic put a halt to anything that would allow our young lives to thrive. Now, in late August, an outdoor activity is deemed the safest means of reunion. So I sit in my friend's concrete backyard with a teakwood fire pit in front of us, and a bag of marshmallows tossed upon an empty chair. As I examine the short pillowy cylindrical confection, I notice it presents crescent-shaped concaves on its inner halves. I have never particularly cared for marshmallows, which is something that I am thankful for as I recall the animal skin and cartilage they contain. Despite my disgust over their ingredients, I accept two marshmallows from her and prepare for the roast.

With an encouraging push onto the forked dual-ended rod, the marshmallows remain steady as they hover above the open flame. Their former protruding soft white peaks grow dense beneath the amber flare. The cracks in the smooth, but naturally flawed pebbled leather-like exterior of the marshmallows glisten. I make note of their innocent appearance which I am aware will writhe within minutes. At the points of their incision, the firm openings now lie torn, slightly drooping. The marshmallows anteriors, currently facing the midnight sky, sweat from the rising heat. The surrounding conversation is of hesitant adolescents soon to embark on their journey of higher education. Looking upon where the treat meets the rod, its colouring mirrors that of its oxidized metal holder. This particular shading is reflective of the enervating transformation that is underway. Just as I do not consume these treats, I do not want to share their fate of submission.

I can tell the consequential months spent apart have paved the way for fear of failure to blossom in our unstimulated minds. I watch as the initial moments of a smooth outer surface are

now long gone, the marshmallow's exteriors presently host a crowd of bloated bubbles. Each of these air pockets seems to hold an opportunity for a promising outcome. That is, unless scorched by the searing heat of the fire. In a way, I begin to see ourselves as the marshmallows. What are we besides malleable substances, dependent on our circumstances to dictate our final form? Just like popping candy, the fire crackles are blazing away at the surrendering confection. Along with the marshmallows we remain in a fixed position, one side towards the night sky facing our potential, and the other battling the fire, gaining colour, texture -- shaping our character.

The roasting marshmallows are difficult to take our eyes off of as the fire leaps above the confection's sides, momentarily swallowing it. This was our last summer free from responsibilities and even that has slipped away from us. It is why I find this particular age is so troubling. There are both so few and many things I am in control of as I am just beginning adulthood. Still, I know I must be wise in my decisions as they determine my direction. At the tips of the rod, I feel a sticky residue, shed by the dessert in its melting form. The marshmallows appear to be leaning into one another, in an effort to seek refuge from the flame. Right now I am facing the sky, my sides slowly gaining their true colouring and I can feel the fire on my posterior. I begin to sweat from the pressures of life as the marshmallows contort from the fiery heat. I can only hope the burns I sustain are first-degree and I will not be left charred.

The creeping decadent aroma pulls me away from my taxing thoughts. These treats are not for my consumption anyway. I would much rather enjoy the sturdy, permanently golden graham cracker. With this wafer come no risks. I am not afraid of altering its composition for it is already in its final state. Yet I consider its journey and I am reminded it too has endured heat like the marshmallows have.

Taking a peek at the belly of the sweet treats, deep cocoa specks appear riddled across sandy nutmeg outer coatings. Through 18 years I have come to develop a golden hue, but just like the fire life rises in intensity. Staring back at the developing treats, I realize there is no escaping this unpalatable confection and its necessary flame. A faint crinkling is heard as the fire continues to burn through the candy's outer shell.