

City: a short-short Story

Tay Vaughan

City: a story written in love
for my fiancée Dagmar during the
Summer of Waiting.

Wien, August, 1966

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C I T Y

Behind the once-grey house at Number Three Napoleon Street lay a small, untidy garden, in the last years gone to seed. In the shaded easterly corner, surrounded by Queen Anne's Lace and Milkweed, a child busied himself in a wooden sandbox, the downhill side of which, rotted away, had left a rough maze of tunnels, slopes, and rises ready-made for invention.

Along this downhill side the child created a city, a Sea-and-Sand green shovel pushing and moulding, destroying and building, designing and constructing. The city had no name because it needed no name; it was his city, his world, and his mind-people were its inhabitants. It was a living, dynamic city, manifesting change with every new thought, with every impulse which entered its architect's mind.

He built first a house, his house. Then behind it a garden much larger than believable. A driveway, a garage, a mailbox, a supermarket, a filling-station, streets and traffic-lights. And he created people, functioning people, to fill the streets and stores, who went quietly about their human ways. And in his work he lost track of time, enchrysalating himself in a world of earnest creation.

At two o'clock the child's mother hurried out into the garden to bring him in for his nap. The sound of the slamming screendoor shattered his concentration, innocently murdering a mailman and collapsing a delicate half-constructed firestation. The sharp call of his name crashed his father's car and cancelled an unborn puppy. At the appearance of his mother's gigantic legs swishing through the Milkweed, his city died with a silent resignation.

It was the child's seventeenth city.