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### Little Red Wagon

I had a vibrant red, rickety, rotting Radio Flyer wagon that I refused to get off of. The feeling of being pulled down a small hill was about as much thrill as I ever experienced as a four year old. I loved the risk of one of the wooden slats giving out while my dad yanked me up the concrete sidewalk. I remember not caring about the consequences of crashing and instead choosing to worry about gaining as much speed as possible. I spent every year Fourth of July in Maine and my best friend and doppelganger, Iris, accompanied me in my wagon on our way to the celebratory events. We would try to avoid the splintered wood but still struggled to find a way out. After a few intense rounds of egg toss and a close one legged race, I was frantic for an ice cream cone. Inevitably, my day ended around 4pm after the food coma and exhaustion hit me. As I reflect on how my experiences have shaped who I am and how time has forced me to evolve, I immediately become nostalgic about my childhood. I have spent some portion of every summer on Squirrel Island with my family and every year, time seems to move faster than I can keep up with.

From ages one to eleven I spent a maximum of two weeks on the island. During this time we rented a small green cottage for whatever two weeks it was available for. An average day on the island consisted of us packing the red wagon in the morning and setting out for the beach, not returning until later in the evening.

I have countless memories of sand crunching between my teeth and sharp shells grazing my toes. I remember filling the wagon with sand and seaglass to add to my infinite collection. These vivid feelings are moments I cherish and as I grow older, I realize that nothing could have possibly disrupted the bliss I felt at the time. The memories I was lucky enough to create, even as a toddler, protrude starkly from my other experiences because I was only able to savor that time for 14 days a year.

After eleven fun filled summers in the green cottage by the field, the house was sold to a new family. It was then that my family began renting the blue house by the water. This house could not compare to the tiny cottage I grew up in, but I was still able to spend time on the island so I eventually came to love it. Switching locations also allowed us to spend an entire month on the island, which was an exciting change. My red wagon, now used for coolers and towels rather than taxi rides and seashells, was still the most vivid staple of summertime. I had the same core group of friends on the island and it was invaluable for me to have more than two weeks to spend with them. Without realizing it, the combination of becoming a teen and elongated my stay on the island had jolted my perception of time. I no longer took full advantage of the environment around me. It was around this point that cell phones and Youtube also became a larger part of my life. Nevertheless, I still tried to get to the beach at least once a day and admire the beauty of the island. Having one month out of the year to spend in my own paradise still put time into perspective for me.

Shortly after our third year of renting the blue house, my family had the opportunity to purchase our own cottage. This was a dream come true for my parents, considering my mother lost her family's original home on the island when she was a child. This change meant the world to me as well, because now I could spend the entire summer in Maine. When the deal closed in early spring, we began the laborious and lengthy work on the fixer upper. The chipped wood of my little red wagon survived the stacks of lumber and mulch that were unceremoniously thrown into it. The wagon served as our most reliable means of transportation on the island which, I neglected to mention, does not allow cars. Our first summer in the new house was the same summer I began work on the island as a ice cream scooper. I spent Tuesday through Sunday from nine in the morning to four in the afternoon scooping at the island's only restaurant. I loved the routine I began to develop and this position allowed me to interact with almost all of the islanders on a daily basis. As much as I enjoyed working, I only managed to get to the beach three times that entire summer. Suddenly I had all the time in the world, yet none at all to spend doing my favorite activities.

I worked at the ice cream shop up until the summer of 2015. I had felt that I was missing too much of the world around me and I knew I only had so much more time left to genuinely appreciate it. With college looming overhead, I did not want to stop working, but I did want to play a bigger role in the island community. I spent the entirety of the summer of 2016 working as one of the island's harbor masters. This job entailed shuttling people in and out from their boats to the dock

and giving rides in the golf cart-turned-taxi cab to the elderly. As anticlimactic as this job sounds, I spent every minute of work cherishing the freezing salt water, dusty dirt roads, and the extraordinary relationships I have built with members of island community over the years. It is now obvious to me that 14 days is more than enough time on an island like Squirrel. I can understand that a month is only as long as the memories that are made during it, and I can certainly appreciate that I will never have as much freedom as I do now.

As my dad dragged me in my little red wagon, I never took a moment to think about my future. I never pictured myself working, leaving for college, or even paused to revel in my childish innocence. In that moment my life simply revolved around the rush of adrenalin that riding in a tiny wagon allowed me. Time is defined by a beginning and an end and I am now able to understand the importance of living for happiness and taking advantage of every singular moment in between. As I've grown I have come to realize that the time for riding in the wagon has ended, and now I am the one responsible to pull it. As more time passes, separating me from those moments in the wagon, it is evident that the thrills of adventure never end, and there will always be another hill for me to ride.