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Laura Remmerde

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The Man Who Drives the Moon

“I had to get up at Thirty o’clock,” Nicky complained. “It was dark outside and I’m really tired.” I held his hand and gently, but firmly, guided him into the bathroom to wash his hands for snack time. A bouquet of impatient “Daisies” waited to wash their hands, if hopping on one foot and jumping around the bathroom like frogs can be called “waiting.” I sang a song about “gnomes waiting in a row” to encourage them to line up. A line formed like magic and Nicky joined reluctantly. I sympathized with Nicky at the affront, having arisen at the infamous hour of “Thirty o’clock” myself, but we had work to do.

Teaching four year olds is a challenge and a joy, sometimes together and sometimes separately. One of the joys I have in the job is how they express themselves.

“I’m going to see the man who drives the moon” Laura crowed, her blond hair ruffled by the breeze she made as she pumped the swing higher into the blue. She and Morgan looked at each other and giggled at their shared journey. The milk white moon looked no higher than the tops of the trees. Surely they would reach it by lunch time.

Both swings sailed higher and higher toward their goal, and I wouldn’t have been much surprised to see a man in a moonlit chariot dip down to drive them away. “Just have faith!” their pumping legs and smiling faces seemed to say.

Jocelynn sat on the window seat holding the egg timer. She watched the sand running and called out “five hundred miles a minute!” Luke, the captain of the ship (window seat to you and me), held tightly to the wooden bowl he was using for a steering wheel and accelerated. Crew members scrambled for their seats and gazed out the windows at the rolling waves (deck and lawn). Three year olds from the next class over swam up to the windows and gaped at the antics of the four year olds. Luke laughed and pointed out the “sea monsters” to his crew. The three year olds, in blithe ignorance of their involvement, gaped a while longer,

obviously amused, then swam away to the swings.

Summer stood in the middle of the room crying, but before I could reach her, Spencer found his own solution to the weeping damsel. He galloped up to her, threw a white ruffled curtain I'd brought in for play time at her head, and said "Hey Summer, let's get married!" Ah, the wisdom! Summer stopped crying immediately, and was just as quickly surrounded by three ladies in waiting who decked her in finery. The white curtain fell in graceful folds, and a velvet cape with an elastic band was transformed into a diadem and sumptuous veil down her back.

Sometime during the play period, the wedding must have taken place by means unknown to me. Perhaps the galloping throw of the wedding garment was the event itself. After a while, when I noticed Summer wandering around looking a little lost, I tiptoed over to the camp fire where Spencer was camping out with his buddies. "I thought you were getting married to Summer?" I queried. "We already are!" Spencer answered carelessly. It was a done thing in his estimation, and he went back to snoozing by the fire.

Time is not a factor in the elements of their play. Dinosaurs romp the fields, scaring princesses on their thrones.

All things are possible, including sudden disappearances. "When I close my eyes, then I'm invisible" announced one of our princesses just the other day. Juliana was clad in a yellow cotton skirt, a blue velvet cape, and a pair of kitty ears. A royal baby lay cradled in her arms. All bowed at her regal command, though I suspect one subject peeked as she ascended the royal staircase. Never mind: her closed eyes assured her impervious invisibility.

This year we have been hiding from the German teacher to surprise him as he enters the room. The "hiding" is done at my command. The whole group rolls into a collection of balls on the floor. They hide their eyes, then I cover them with a sheet and begin to sing to them. "Caterpillars, caterpillars, growing wings, Soon they will be most glorious things." Benjamin lifts the "cocoon" off and the butterflies spring forth. "Surprise!" they shout, and somehow Benjamin is always amazed, and they are always excited to have fooled him once again. When their eyes are closed, and the cocoon settles down over the caterpillars, they are not there, as effectively as if the man who drives the moon had whisked them away.

The other day Nicholas spoke to the whole group from a great height of

five year old wisdom. “A teacher like this with this many kids” he said in a knowing way, “makes forty eighty cents a day.”

Well, it's worth it, and if banks were as magical as our classroom, we could multiply that with a blink of our eyes.