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## Dinosaur Eggs

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It was a perfect Indian summer evening. The heat of the past three months had left its unmerciful mark on all who had endured it, granting this sense of Indian summer a welcome relief. The air seemed easier to breathe with the sun's setting, leaving a calm before the onslaught of the fall winds and the frigid "blue northers" that would follow. It was the kind of evening well suited for yard work, something I always put off as long as humanly possible. School had started early, even though September was still on the horizon, so most of the children were in for the night. A quiet permeated Early Morn Drive as I surveyed my long-neglected gardens.

That was when I first noticed how overgrown everything had become in the side yard. As I poked and pulled on branches and limbs, I spotted the vines creeping up the holly tree, dwarfing the crepe myrtles and obliterating the junipers. The large, green leaves connected the thick vines to thinner vines that sent spiral fingers off in every direction as if searching for new and unconquered territories.

This will never do I said to myself. Whatever this is, it has got to go!

Actually I'd been quite lucky for someone not known for plant expertise. (No Green Thumb here!) I had the birds to thank for most of the things in this garden. The seeds they dropped as they flew by left me wonderful treasures: a cottonwood tree, blackberry patch, two rose bushes, and an assortment of crepe myrtles--but this new growth was completely overpowering. As I pulled on one vine after another, looking for some sign of origin, I began to unearth strange pod-like structures. They were attached to the vines at various locations. The more I pulled, the more pods appeared. The smallest was already the size of my fist, green, somewhat fuzzy, and hard to the touch. Pulling and tugging as I did sent the pods swaying as if moved by a strong wind. They leapt out from behind leaves on the ground and swayed from bushes and trees overhead. What on Earth could they be? Wait . . . a . . . minute. Maybe they're not from Earth . . . My mind raced backwards to the science fiction movie classic, INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS. YES!!! They sent pods from somewhere in outer-space. Those pods started out small, too! Inside each was the exact likeness of someone in that town. Oh, great! I was now raising perfect likenesses of all my neighbors! We'd all look the same as when we were humans, only our checkbooks

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would always be balanced, our houses clean, and our kitchens orderly--NO DUST!!!, NO TEEN-AGE BACK TALK!!! Oh, the thought of all this was unnerving. I would have to save Early Morn Drive from such a fate and destroy these invaders. I began to attack them with a vengeance, imagining myself wearing a shield emblazoned with a Green Thumb crest. I was so engrossed in my task and my imagination that I became oblivious to everything else. That's why the voice came as such a startling surprise.

"What are you doing?"

At first I believed it to be part of my story, but then it repeated, "What are you doing?"

The voice was clear and unassuming as anything. Turning around, I was surprised to see two little girls staring back at me. Of course I knew them, but somehow, here, saving us from the body snatchers, they looked different to me. The oldest was about five years old, barefooted and barechested, wearing only a

short, pleated skirt. She was forthright in her half-nakedness, displaying that absolutely confident air of one supposed to be dressed as she: with that sense of self that society steals too soon.

The little one at her side was wearing a short dress with a scooped neck. A floral pattern covered her dress, and she looked as if she belonged in my garden. Both appeared to have played that day. Little beads of perspiration stood like jewels around their hairlines and noses in the descending half-light of dusk. When the little one laughed, I swore I heard the sound of tiny bells.

A third time, the question was repeated, "What are you doing?"

Finding my voice, I told them of my discovery and desire to rid the yard of these menacing pod-like creatures.

Bending over, the older one studied the pods nearest her. Following her lead, the little one silently complied.

After a brief period they nodded in agreement to some unspoken pact. The older one, obviously the designated speaker, said they'd like to help.

Together we pulled and pulled on the vines, laughing and making a game out of taming my jungle. The little one would jump up and down and clap her hands whenever her sister and I managed to dislodge a particularly troublesome vine. Once, we even had the holly tree bent completely in half by our pulling. When the vine broke free, the tree snapped back to its rightful position, swaying slightly

rid of them--throw them away. We didn't even know what they were--what if they were dangerous???

Her serious countenance gave way to a broad smile.

"They're harmless," she said with authority. Silence stood between us. Then I said,

"Do you know what these are?"

"Of course," she said in her direct manner.

"Dinosaur Eggs," she said.

Melting completely, I looked anew at our vine and pod pile, nodding silently. Of course, dinosaur eggs. Why had-



before coming to a stop, as if we'd not been there at all.

When we finished, vines lay scattered on the ground over an area of about seven feet. The pile was as high as the littlest girl was tall. We ran around it singing our own made-up songs and chants. The older one turned suddenly and said,

"May I have some of the pods?"

She was serious and sincere. Bending down so our eyes were on the same level, I asked why she wanted them. She said it was a secret.

I told her I felt responsible for them and needed to get

n't I thought of it myself: were they any more or less believable than invading pods from outer space, for heaven's sake? What would I say to my little friends now?

I watched in amazement as the older one followed by the younger one studied the pods and selected only the biggest and firmest. Then pulling up her skirt in the front to make a basket and instructing her sister to do likewise, they loaded their treasures and turned to leave. At the sidewalk, as I thanked them for coming to my aid, the older said,

"You know, you could take our picture now, with the

dinosaur eggs, if you like.”

Such an invitation must be heeded! They’d seen me on the street before with my big, wooden, 8x10 camera. As a matter of fact, I had tried to photograph them once or twice, but they never stayed still long enough for such a machine and were always blurry in the final print.

Solemnly, they sat on the sidewalk and arranged their treasures.

I raced inside to get my gear, realizing in horror that I only had one piece of film loaded. The light was almost gone outside. They’d have to be still for six or seven seconds—a truly impossible situation, but then again, you never know! This might be the time everything would fall into place. It might be the magic my grandmother always said was in the big black box that would give life to this image.

Racing back outside, I set up quickly, telling them they’d have to be absolutely statue-like for six seconds. I’d count out loud. “OK,” they said. I made the picture. Then they ceremoniously packed up their precious cargo and padded silently in their bare feet down the street. I watched them as far as I could see them. At the corner, the older one turned to wave, spilling one of her eggs, but the younger one caught it in time. The older one called out,

“I’ll come get you when they hatch, and you can make another picture.” Then both waved and headed on their way.

My six year old, who had mysteriously slept through this adventure (she usually never misses a thing!) came outside to see what had been going on. She carefully examined the pods as well and concurred with the girls,

“Yep, dinosaur eggs, all right. Can I put some under my bed, too, Mom?”

It was so tempting. But then I remembered the body snatchers and chose not to take that chance. . . although her room would always be clean . . .

“No!” I said firmly. We pushed them into bags for the trash man who was to come in the morning. I never checked the trash before it was picked up. My daughter claims to have seen a hole at the bottom of the biggest bag, big enough for something round, about the size of my fist, to have escaped.

Is it possible that somewhere near here a tiny dinosaur is gasping its first breath of air, or the perfect likeness of a neighbor is busy tidying-up?

About the picture: When I developed the negative, I was delighted to see the eggs in sharp detail and not surprised that my little friends had moved their heads. Like I said before, they only appear as blurs in my other pictures, so I guess this is their role. But, for me, one glance at the picture is enough to recall the glory of a perfect Indian sum-

mer evening, insuring my grandmother’s long-standing prophecy about magic and the big black box and other things to be so.

I’ve included the picture with this story, so everyone who reads this will know what dinosaur eggs really look like.

I never got the chance to take the second photograph of the hatched eggs. The girls decided the dinosaurs didn’t hatch because we got to the eggs too late.

Now that you know what they look like, the girls advise the following:

1. Remove them from your garden when they are very, very small.
2. Place them in a basket covered by a baby blanket.
3. Put them under your bed.

You’ll know when they hatch--then call me. I’ll be happy to come and make the picture.

Until then, beware of body snatchers and watch out for pods. You never know. I’ve pretty much decided that, at least on Early Morn Drive, all things are possible.

*A child said "What is the grass?"  
fetching it to me with full hands.*

Walt Whitman