

Down by the bridge

story · May 10, 2024

I clung to my mother like a barnacle for years and years. So much so, that I think it used to bother her. I was shy and introverted and wanted nothing to do with people outside of my own family.

In the late 60's, my parents moved from Cedar Rapids to a very rural area outside of Swisher. My dad purchased 80 acres of wooded hills and pasture with a creek winding through it, and built a house for us. Very little of the land was suited for farming. My mother was a stay at home mom then. She spent her days fixing up the new house, painting the faux bricks of the foundation by hand so that they would look real.

During this time, my sisters were older and off at school; my father at work. So it was just her and I at home all day. We were new to country living, having come from the suburbs of Cedar Rapids. So once a day, we would take walks. Through the fields, visiting an old abandoned barn, that I loved climbing around in. And down the gravel road, to a little bridge that crossed the creek. Of course I'd throw I'd throw rocks in the creek and she even let me scurry down the rocky bank and get all muddy and wet.

Decades later, after she was diagnosed with cancer, I remember that we were talking in a little coffee shop in Cranford, New Jersey. She had come a long way from being a house-mom in rural Iowa. We were talking about our favourite memories. She asked if I remembered our walks to the bridge. I said of course, but wondered if that was truly one of her favourite memories. She nodded. When I asked why, she said: 'There were so many sunny, beautiful days - and it was so quiet and peaceful, just the two of us. And you used to hold my hand the whole way there and back.'