

Back to my home

Winner Junior prose
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Okay, keep going... Almost there... Come on! You know you can do it, for God's sake, come on! You've done it before, so why are you being such a sucker?! Squeeze through, any way you can... Mind that branch, oh you silly bat!

Well, I thought I could. It's just too small a hole now! Well, err; I got bigger, but anyway. I can't reach the field on the other side. Damn, damn and damn again, alright! This is annoying. I really wanna get through, to see if anything's changed. Hey, I've been away fifteen years or something. You don't come back to a childhood shrine way out in the woods every day, do you? Be a bit weird if you did They'd be all over the place.

At some time, I think every child has a little hiding place they call their own. Like in a corner of their room, or out in the woods, under their bed, by a river, wherever. Mine was way out in the countryside, and it took me forty five minutes to reach it on my bike. The country's great round here though. Really lovely. Loads of fields, horsies and sheeps. They're awfully funny, the sheep in the field next to me. I could sit here for hours, but that wouldn't be practical. Didn't there used to be a stile round here somewhere? I think so...

I'm walking along beside that evil hedge, enjoying the sights, and fresh air. London doesn't have air like this, ha! I hate London really, but my husband loves it, and so does our two year old daughter. Ugh. What's she gonna be like when she grows up, I ask you? Probably one of thos-

There's that stile! I pause for a moment, and take in the countryside. It's just amazing out here, really it is. Yup, the fresh air, and those fields, field upon field upon field upon field. Just incredible. The trees, dancing slightly in the wind. I want to sway along with them, like I did when I was 10, and even up until I was 16, but I'd look like I was on drugs, or I was a flower hippie or something ridiculous. Imagine if a cyclist came by! My reputation, smashed! Well, so what I'm being a bit... I dunno. What was I gonna say? Being a bit...stuck up, I s'pose. Now, c'mon girl, over the stile. Time to stop the sightseeing. On with the journey!

Continued...

I just pause again, for a moment, with one leg over the stile and one still on the other side. Breath in, breath out. Feel that fresh country air: That used to be my mantra here, and I'd dance about with the trees in my field until I stepped into something nasty (most of the year round it was a cow field) or fell over. It was so much fun, sitting under my willow tree and flicking stones, trying to aim for cowpats, because there wasn't much else to aim at, actually. I could swing from the branches, climb up into them, even hug them, like a little hippie in training. It was sweet. Once I took a camera along, and went paddling in the river. I took photos of it, swirling, bubbling, gurgling and giggling from eddy to eddy, but they didn't seem to reflect the river, and I almost threw them away. It's a good thing I did keep them, actually, because they're the only reminder I have that the country actually exists when I'm in London for months on end.

My husband agreed that I could go on hols for a couple of weeks, and then come back. I had leave from work; I was staying in the village's B&B. It had been a good holiday so far, exactly half the way into the bargain, with a week remaining, but it wouldn't be complete without a trip to my former paradise. I was just drawn to it.

I pushed myself off the stile, and immediately landed in something disagreeable. I heard the squelch, looked down, and began laughing uncontrollably. Country pancake. Country pancake! Like the name of that book. I couldn't stop laughing. I leant against the stile, wheezing hysterically, and began staggering across the field, looking out for more country pancakes, and all the while giggling and laughing, not able to stop. I managed to get all the way to my willow without realising it.

When I'd stopped with the giggling, I began stroking it, whispering secrets to it, hugging it. Yes, I know that's a tiny bit dippy, but I'd been away years, and I loved the willow. The river too. It was a hot day, and a dip in the river would be lovely. Very refreshing, especially today. I remember, I once went in it in winter, and almost froze myself. The long bike ride back alternately attacked me with wind, and warmed me up, for I was cycling like a maniac. I sank into the bath when I was back home, and mum was outside the door, sometimes whispering "Areyou alright?" or "Oh, my poor girl!", and then scolding me mercilessly, while I fluffed up the bubbles in my bath, and tried not to giggle.

So, I made my way to the river. Whilst I called the willow mine, the river was fully its own. Ruthless, then a kind, burbling friend. I still loved it anyway. Skipping down to the bottom of the field, I couldn't find it Where was it? Usually around this time, in spring, it was a raging torrent! Climbing down into a ditch, I caught my breath in disappointment. I'd found it. Well, I'd found a trickle, not the strong, bold river I'd known at 18. I swallowed a sob, and told myself I was being ridiculous. It was a river, not a family heirloom. But in a way, it was mine. My river. All mine. And now the silly thing was gone!

But anyway, I'll just enjoy my willow.