



[\(http://thebarking.com/\)](http://thebarking.com/)

WRITERS ARE BOTH INCREDIBLY ARROGANT AND INSECURE SIMULTANEOUSLY, AND THOSE TWO THINGS ARE SO CLOSE, REALLY. – WILLIAM T. VOLLMANN

BY GABRIELLE LEE ([HTTP://THEBARKING.COM/AUTHOR/GLEE/](http://thebarking.com/author/glee/)) / FEBRUARY 2, 2014

# WHAT I REMEMBER WHEN I GOOGLE STREET-VIEW MY CHILDHOOD HOME

**T**he strawberry patch is gone.

The bright birds of paradise that reflected the sunlight and struggled through the layer of smog are gone, too. The screen door is still there. I forgot about that screen door, the one that our babysitters had to unlatch after the main door in order to accept pizza. I forgot about the roof, too—the same rust-colored tiles are still there, the stucco walls underneath it still stained at the bottom from watering the—well, it's dirt, now. Was it dirt then? I don't remember. I also don't remember whether the grass used to be patchy like it is now, or whether that tree with the cotton-like flowers is the same one my mother planted, or even whether my mother planted that tree at all.

[\(](http://thebarking.com/wp-)

[homemade\\_sidewalk\\_chalk\\_s1](#)

[content/uploads/2014/02/homemade\\_sidewalk\\_chalk\\_s1.jpg\)](#)

I do remember the chalk drawings we used to make on the driveway, back when you couldn't see my flaws. Or if you did see them, you saw through them, followed me patiently along anyway. We let chalk dust powder our hands, our knees, our faces, our calves, as we made silly nonsensical drawings. A sun with a smile, as if it cared

about keeping us warm all the way from outer space, as if the sunglasses we drew on it would shield it from its own rays. We drew rain, and rainbows. I think you drew a rocketship. Maybe an astronaut.

Or a dinosaur. You wanted to be a paleontologist once. I remember sitting on the bottom bunk in your room while you played dinosaur-explorer computer games at the desk next to me. I think I was bored by these games, I wanted to play “Oregon Trail” (because dying of dysentery was more exciting than digging up old bones?), but for some reason I stayed and watched. I remember staring at the top of your room. I remember that coral-colored radio-slash-tape-player that played Madonna songs and lullabies. I remember the rug that covered the floor, designed to look like a little city, with roads wide enough that you could put toy cars on there. I was always the fire engine because you wouldn’t let me be the Corvette.

But I made you play Barbies with me, so I suppose it was only fair.

It’s appropriate that I was the fire truck. I’ve always been careful and you’ve always rushed around. You, like Buzz Lightyear—*to infinity and beyond!*—me like Thumbelina, terrified of adventure every step of the way.

So how was it that you willingly followed me all those years? Blindly trusted that with me, you’d be safe? Like that time we were supposed to have a yard sale, but Mom said no, and I was so disappointed that I somehow convinced you (or you let yourself be convinced) to let me wake you up at five or six the next morning (the same time we’d wake up for elementary-school field trips) and put on the yard sale in the driveway anyway, dragging out the Lego table with a mesh basket in the middle, where we carefully arranged such novelties as cars and plastic tea sets and things our mom might have arranged to give away, headbands and old t-shirts and clip-on bow ties, while you and I tried to sell five cups of bitter lemonade and held up signs made from Mr. Smellys and printer paper and shouted in our feeble voices, “Yard sale here! Yard sale here!” to an empty street in a sleepy neighborhood where most kids—including the cute boy across the street—were curled up on the couch with bowls of cereal watching “Recess” and “Pepper Ann” and “Doug.”

We both got in trouble for that one. I probably let you take more of the blame than I should have. But still after that you felt safe walking with me to the park down the street or playing “Marco Polo” with me in Grandma and Grandpa’s pool, or being a founding member of the many “clubs” I formed in our garage in the summers, sitting on dirty beach chairs and drinking club soda. You felt safe when we found worms in the strawberry patch in the front lawn, and I screamed and ran away.

But now that strawberry patch is gone.

