

## Jumping into Sheets

Marissa Garcia

I got the idea into my head that girls were supposed to be feathers. I'm talking pink, walking wisps, making their way around breathing pixie dust.

At age seven I was about forty-one pounds. I had a rope of wavy hair down to my butt, and I was often dressed in second-hand floral jumpers from Hannah's Hand-Me Downs, the children's clothing resale shop my mother got stuck with when its original owner picked up and jetted off to California. I was a fashion victim, but that didn't stop me from attaining a boyfriend, a boy one year my senior.

His name was Junior, and he was a grubby little thing, really. I remember a spattering of freckles and slightly bucked teeth under a smooth mushroom cap of brown hair, and bitten down nailbeds lined with black. Junior and his family moved into the house down the block that my friend Tori had vacated when her parents up and decided one day to move to Mexico and rent the place out.

Junior had two forgettable younger brothers whose names I don't recall. They came over every single day the summer my brother David turned five and leapt about our front lawn like spastic multi-colored monkeys.

We went through a phase. When Junior and I were not laying on the lawn holding hands on top of my baby blanket and gazing into each other's eyes while David and the brothers teased us, we were obsessed with leaping off the square stone pillars of my front stoop. The act, to us, demonstrated the magnitude of our coolness. Jumping off of something high to land mostly unhurt made us brave, and kids, I think, want to feel brave very badly.

One day Junior decided to switch it up. He came trotting down the sidewalk alone carrying a Power Rangers bed sheet.

"What's that for?" I asked him from where I was perched on top of

a pillar. I expected it to be part of a lawn hand-holding session. David peered out of the screen door to see if the brothers had come over.

“You’ll see. We just need everyone out here to do it.”

Our brothers eventually joined us. Junior stood in the middle of my front lawn, the sheet half unfolded. We surrounded him and waited.

“We’re gonna open this up, okay guys? Now hold it open. Pull.”

Junior arranged us in a circle under a pillar, each of us gripping a part of the sheet taut.

“Move over here. No, go that way. OK, stay like that.”

He scrambled up the pillar and stood on top.

“OK, guys. Catch me!”

Without giving us a chance to process this command, he jumped in a high leap over our little barrier. He landed in the center of the spread-out sheet, and it collapsed under his weight as it was pulled from our grasp.

“You guys!” Junior protested as he picked himself up. “You were supposed to hold me up!”

Two five-year-olds and two seven-year-olds looked down in shame for failing Junior.

“Again!” he commanded, and made his way to the pillar. This time, with fair warning, he didn’t hit the lawn immediately, but rather remained suspended in the sheet for a split second before he crashed down.

“You try, David.” Junior said, exasperated with us. He positioned himself in David’s place at the sheet, obviously convinced that with his aid, we could succeed in holding someone up.

David was easier, and we actually held him up for a few seconds before he fell. Junior’s brothers’ attempts ended up the same as his own. Then it was my turn.

I made my way to the pillar, knowing my chance of success at this whole thing was slim, but thinking in the back of my female brain that girls are feathers. I would be the one to rock giddily in this sheet cradle as the boys held me up. I knew it. I climbed up the pillar and stood above the boys and the sheet.

I pushed back my messy ponytail and paused.

“Come on!”

I held my breath and leapt, holding my legs in what I hoped was a graceful ballet pose as gravity pulled me down. I bumped heavily down onto the ground, taking the sheet with me. The boys walked away, bored with this game. I sat in the middle of the crumpled sheet, staring in disbelief at the primary colors.