THE GARDEN WORLDS

For as long as I can remember in the early years of my life, the garden seemed huge. Now, that tiny slice of nature which seemed so big to a 4-year-old me is in reality so small. But I guess that’s the way it goes. Things that seem big, turn out to be small. Since I was old enough to pick up a shovel I have helped in the garden. Sometimes reluctantly, but I got the job done. It’s remarkable what an extra set of hands can do, and so soon enough, the garden grew. We made compost and created habitats, and as the garden improved it attracted animals. Over the years, the skink population has grown. The bird count has increased, despite the fact they are hunted by neighbourhood cats. A few years ago, a peregrine falcon alighted upon a branch and sat there, staring into me. It has come back, from time to time, resting on that tree as it journeys, to who knows where. Recently, that we acquired a frog population. They just sort of, showed up one day. Of course, we had been working on the pond, so that was probably what attracted them. They were Tasmanian brown tree frogs, and, that was the first time I had seen a frog in real life. At this point, I was astounded. I had never really considered it before, but this garden, that had seemed so big to me, was even bigger to the animals residing within. It was their world. All except the birds are virtually confined to our garden. We are surrounded by a road and three houses. I redoubled my efforts. I was going to make this place as good a world as any other.

My garden is not the only place I have been helping. I do land care in a nearby reserve. That place seemed so unknown back then. Larger than my garden by far, and yet, now I know it like the back of my hand. I’ve seen bluetongues and rabbits and wallabies there, but not in my garden. I have seen skinks and frogs and falcons in my garden, but not in the reserve. The saddest part about land care is the creek. It runs through the reserve. But it is not a nice place for animals to live, for it is full of garbage. The reserve, surrounded by houses, could very well be the edge of civilization, a two minute walk and then dead quiet. No cars. No planes. No houses. There is just one thing. The creek. Floating down on it are soda cans, and Styrofoam, and chip packets, and I fish them out. It’s heart breaking. And even more so to learn that 1,000,000 species are under threat of extinction for the same reasons. Garbage in their homes. But this time, there’s nowhere else to go.

I wish I could pick up a shovel and change the world. This world seems big but is in reality bursting at the seams. I wish I could fish all the garbage out of the ocean, and the rivers, and the creeks. But what good would that do? Unless we change, this problem will keep on happening. Like invasive weeds re-growing. Slowly. Slowly we will make it. I just wish we could speed things up. I wish we could buy time for the animals, and for us. We can. We just have to try. I urge you, pick up your shovels, get your gloves. Let’s not just restore our yards, our parks. Let’s restore the planet!

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