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Fall Days In The Corn Field

In the fall when I walk down the sidewalk and leaves crackle under my feet, and when my eyes lift to the treetops which are spattered with brightly colored leaves, my mind is filled with memories of fall days I spent in the country as a child. The breeze rustling the leaves over my head reminds me of the sound of golden, brittle leaves of corn quivering in the wind.

Covering several acres of land behind our home was a corn field. We waited all summer, my two brothers, my sister and I, for the corn stalks to grow tall and sturdy and then slowly die, turning golden brown. The stalks had to be fragile enough to yield to our stamping feet. We waited impatiently until one day we knew the field was ready for us to construct trails through it.

On a fresh, sunny day, the humidity of summer no longer in the air, we ran outside eager to begin our great project. From an obscure entrance, kept secret by the four of us, we would enter the field for the start of the main trail. The stalks rose above us, their leaves forming a canopy over our heads. The stalks seemed to be rigid, unbending, sometimes a couple inches thick; but when we kicked them down and twisted them off, they revealed hollow centers.

Pushing and shoving, we gradually cleared a narrow trail. We were careful to avoid the sticky spider webs and dreadful bugs that clung to the corn. We often heard screeches when someone encountered the nasty creatures.

At some point, usually when we grew bored with making a straight, ordinary trail, we would make a loop or a fork in the path, then separate, each to make his own trail. So all of the trails were different — results of each person's imagination. The whole field became a maze. Everyone tried to make his trail the hardest to follow. Dead ends and jogs made the trail much more exciting. Once in a while, we would clear a small area for a meeting room for secret conferences.

Our clothes became gummy and our skin itched from the juices on the corn leaves. The leaves also scratched our faces with their razor edges. We didn't mind at all though; it was part of the adventure. Weather didn't affect us either. The leaves over our heads protected us from most of the rain. The trails eventually grew muddy, but we laughed and squished along.

Finally, when we had decided our trails were long and devious enough, we walked over all of them, mashing down broken ends of stalks until we made a flat path — the ground packed solid, running through the field like a tunnel.

For a month or so, until harvest time, we would play enthusiastic games of chase, follow the leader or hide and seek, or we would gather at the cleared meeting area and run off in separate directions to see who could come out of the field first. We crashed through the field, tripping over and bumping into stalks in our haste. Each of us tried to memorize the trails. Sometimes, we would run on the trails as fast as we could (which was difficult because they were so narrow) to test our memory of the twists and turns and dead ends. We played with a sense of togetherness not always apparent in our everyday lives where the girls were in competition with the boys or the older ones competed against the younger ones.

The cool air was filled with laughter and noise until nightfall when our mother called us; then, dirty and sweating, we grudgingly left the field. Half of the evening was spent planning new games we could play the next day.

It was one of my favorite fall activities to make trails in the corn field.