

## Autumn Souvenirs

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As I was poking around in our basement one autumn Sunday, my old roller skates caught my eye. They hadn't been used since May and inspired a sudden urge to go skating, even though my unfinished grade six math homework hovered on my radar. That morning I had completed only half of the required problems, and put the rest off until after supper. I looked around, found the metal key, and brought the skates outside.

Sitting on the front steps I attached the skates to my shoes, did up the leather straps, and set off down the sidewalk toward Karen's house. Having forgotten how heavy and clunky roller skates were, it took a few minutes to remember how to propel myself forward.

Karen was home and we decided to skate to Fisher park, a few blocks away. She attached her skates, and we wobbled off down the street. Sidewalk cracks were one obstacle but the downhill slopes, even the gentle ones, were worse.

We weren't very good at slowing down or stopping. On one downgrade we picked up speed and I lost all control of my feet. I swerved onto a lawn, crashed into a tree, and startled an old gentleman reading his paper on the porch. Karen skating gracefully past, hooted with laughter. I shook my fist at her bitterly as I hugged the tree.

Her turn to embarrass herself came on the way back. She lost her balance crossing a deep crack in the cement and flew off the sidewalk into a huge pile of leaves in front of my house. My dad was just coming out of the garage unrolling the hose as he walked. "Are you hurt?" he asked Karen.

"No, I'm fine." She stood up and brushed off all the leaves stuck to her sweater and in her hair.

"Can we rake these up and jump in them?" I asked my dad.

"No, I'm just about to set fire to them. Rake up the ones in the backyard."

"We'd rather watch the leaves burn," I said. We sat on the grass to take off our roller skates, as my dad lit a match and set the dry leaves alight. Wisps of grey smoke rose from the pile and soon the leaves were crackling with an orange glow.

"I love the smell of burning leaves," Karen sighed as she fell over on her back on the lawn. Our next door neighbour had a big pile of leaves in front of his house. He set it on fire and when it got going a smoky haze drifted through the neighbourhood in the late afternoon sun.

Judy was coming down the street toward us. "Come on, we're going to rake up the leaves in the backyard and jump in them," Karen yelled. The two big maple trees provided a huge quantity of leaves which we soon had raked into a giant pile.

We took turns climbing on the fence and jumping into the leaves, then raking them back up until the sunlight faded and we were exhausted. Judy and Karen headed home for supper, their hair full of leaf bits, and I went into the garage to shake them all off. My dad was hosing down the last embers and the air was turning chilly.

As I washed up for dinner, the delicious fragrance of my mom's spaghetti sauce filled the house and I was very hungry. Suddenly and sadly I remembered that after dinner my fun day would end the same way it started, with grade six math homework.