



The Games We Played: A Celebration of Childhood and Imagination

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If childhood is magic, kids have created its principal enchantment by dreaming up their own games, writing their own rules, inventing endless variations on anything fun. Bottle Cap Soldiers, Kid Crusher, Ring-a-leavio, Chinaberry War -- no one remembers the scores anymore and the rules changed as often as the players, but the strongest and best memories of childhood grow from the games we played.

With this enchanting volume, Steven A. Cohen shares a collection of childhood memories from a host of stars, public figures, and writers, from President Bill Clinton and Al Roker to Jackie Collins and Rob Reiner. Novelist Brad Meltzer describes an ongoing series of increasingly lunatic dares he and his friends staged to determine the Craziest Kid in the World. Movie star Esther Williams remembers the dollhouse built by her father in the midst of Depression-era poverty, and the endless scenes she acted out with simple paper dolls behind its miniature walls. Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist David Maraniss recollects a Wisconsin childhood in which his friends created a version of hardball called Five Hundred -- until they hit the ball into the zoo's elephant cage and the vast gray beast gobbled it down.

As varied as these tales are, together they create a marvelous picture of childhood freedom and imagination. As Maraniss remembers, "There were no adults acting out fantasies of being major league managers. Childhood was for children." In an age when computers, television, and soccer practice all compete for a child's attention, these stories recall a different time -- when free time was actually free.

We all have memories of the games we played -- memories so fond and so powerful that the events themselves could have happened yesterday. With this moving and hilarious collection, the simple joy of imagination introduces us again to the genuine magic of childhood.

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