Springtime Memories

Words Pierre Banchereau



Once upon a time, there was a garden in Anjou, surrounding an old eighteenth-century presbytery with large white shutters. The garden was bordered by a small river with a good spot to fish in the shade of the white quince tree, leaning against an antique wash-house that was some two centuries old. Fishing wouldn't bring enough to satisfy the appetite of lunchtime guests, but no matter! Daydreaming, breathing in the air, enjoying the calm and tranquil surroundings, spotting pond skaters, otters and carp were some of the other pleasures for the fisherman dressed in camouflage uniform, rubber boots, hat and a fur-lined jacket.

The pond could be reached via a long, distinctive white gravel driveway, making an unforgettable sound under your bicycle tires. Lupins, peonies, raspberries, apricots, tamarisks, almond trees, dahlias and herbs all mixed together in an English-style garden. In the midst of it all, a parterre of 200 scented, multicoloured rosebushes lay in the middle of a perfectly manicured lawn where there were once early-century garden lounges to enjoy round after round of jams or winter preserves.

It was a ripe playground for stories, for any child seeking delectable adventures or playing knights. The bell rang! Time to take a seat at the table laid with morning glory-decorated Gien dinner plates, glasses for the grown-ups and Amora plastic cups for the little ones featuring their favourite heroes. We savoured the taste of small radishes, asparagus and fresh green garden beans, wild mushrooms and endless servings of homemade plum pie while enjoying the fresh, colourful bouquets picked in the early morning, which were even more beautiful against the fireplace.

For some, the afternoon would often begin after taking a nap together in the shade of the swing seat, while others would nap against the cool of the tufa stone. This white stone catches the light and captures the colours of the sky, whatever the season. Gardening, colouring, DIY, card games and cooking were all resumed once more after lunch – even visits to the wine cellar! Each day unfolded anew.

A Certain Look at Maison Debeaulie (1989)

