The playground of my elementary school is a place of many firsts in my life—the first time I giggled about a crush, the first time I felt rejected by a friend, and the first time a boy embraced me. Most importantly, though, the playground is where I delved into my first career; here, I became a paleontologist. When we were just six, my best friend Vivian and I would spend every recess underneath the slide, digging for dinosaur bones. We were explorers, grabbing clumps of dirt with our little hands and rummaging through entangled roots with sticks, wondering when we would find our next big discovery. Now, as I walk across the playground, a gust of wind seems to transport me back in time. I sit in the very spot where Vivian and I explored the muddy earth, and, peering in the distance, through the memories, I can almost see the other kids playing tag in the field. While they ran and jumped, we carried on with our meticulous work, undisturbed, our clothes decorated with grass stains and caked- on mud.

I remember how excited our young voices sounded as we began to uncover fascinating archeological items—a penny, a weirdly shaped root, a bottlecap. If we were really lucky, the two of us would uncover a large treasure, something with an elaborate history. I remember Vivian whispering to me the first time we felt our sticks scrape against the grain of a brick, “I know what this is. It’s from the old school before it was torn down. It was haunted—maybe someone was buried here.” I, being the realist that I was, even at the age of six, was skeptical about these ghost stories.  I quickly realized, however, that molding our own history made our adventures more fun. We dug for clues and evidence of the haunting. Our imagination ran wild.

Suddenly, in the present, I pull my cardigan tightly to my chest. A chill has caused goosebumps to spread all over my body, snapping me back to reality. Now, I see a parking lot instead of a playground and gravel instead of grass. The slab of concrete prevents any more digging, but I smile, because the memories, our personal fossils, are waiting to be rediscovered.