

# Sensory Delights

## Get Real by Brooke Bessesen



### Going out on a limb, life's destiny found in the climb

I grew up in cold country where spring was the season of hope. Dirty patches of snow melted slowly into oblivion like the Wicked Witch of the West and delicate lilac buds, bursting with the sweet smell of purple, always marked my saltant return to my backyard playground.

As the heavens warmed under the sun's sparkling eye, one of my first orders of business was to clamber up our enormous elm tree.

Grasping the dark hardwood rungs, held fast with rusting nails, I would pull myself ever higher until I reached the fork. Here, I basked in the promise of summer – rubber daisy adorned flip-flops, shimmering eye shadow and candy necklaces at the public pool.

Nestled between the three largest branches I would peer up through the twisting limbs at the boundless blue sky. It was a place for dreaming,

for pondering possibilities ... and I often imagined each overhead branch as a destiny I might select.

One branch reached out to life as an astronaut. Another led to the Olympics. Perhaps I would eventually brave the gnarled bough of motherhood, venture onto the Peace Corps offshoot, or risk the unsteady arm of fame. The options seemed unlimited.

"You can be anything you want to be." My parents strapped those words to my diaper-clad bottom like rocket jets, opening the giant doors of my mind and propelling me toward my potential.

It has been a thrill ride, swerving between trials and triumphs. Sometimes I feel like one of those little pink peg people in *The Game of Life* by Milton Bradley ... winding my way along the harrowing road, next to my blue peg husband, trying to make decisions that I'll not regret – ones that avoid jail time, bankruptcy and death, and which ensure a strong family, wonderful

memories and, well, a good refrigerator.

Barring a very bad spin of the wheel, I am less than halfway through the adventure, but I'm starting to realize with some trepidation that my options are narrowing.

I can't help thinking of that childhood tree, long since eaten by beetles and chopped up for firewood. Aren't we often tempted out onto one of life's branches and, taking diversions on a hunch, coaxed left, or driven right, only to discover that we can no longer get to other branches that once stretched before us?

Sometimes I think we shimmy up our trees willy nilly, paying no particular attention to our choices or where they might lead us. And even if we are satisfied with the limb we've gone out on, every now and again it's difficult not to look longingly at those we have forgone.

I will never be an astronaut. I don't really want to be an astronaut—but I liked having the option. A cross-branch still offers passage to motherhood, but if I go much further that, too, may become unavailable.

On the bright side, we are privy to freedoms that earlier generations were not, including the ability to switch branches, to modify lifestyles and explore new avenues at almost any age. Lives are more dynamic and flexible than ever before.

However, we are not merely concerned with where we end up. The limbs we go out on also define our lives, day-to-day. At every juncture umpteen offshoots beckon us into their leafy hinterland

and with the outcome of each decision growing increasingly critical, being too conservative or too desultory in our choices could prove disastrous.

Our only guides for this important journey hide in a matrix of questions. What are our goals? What makes us happy? Where do we want to live and with whom? What is important to us – health, security, success, family? And ultimately, what do we want out of life?

No correct answers exist and the goal remains only to navigate a perfectly imperfect life with love and courage.

It's really not as much a matter of undoing the past as appreciating the future. Swinging out to glimpse the morrow, I see many more splits ahead, some of which surely lead to amazing places! I am excited to see where my branches take me; fulfilling a destiny is like slowly unwrapping the best present in the world.

And sometimes, when a warm breeze whispers in my ear, I can still feel that old elm's rough bark scraping my knees and the sun's rays tickling my face as I look up toward the boundless blue sky.

It is spring, the season of hope ... so I keep climbing.

*Scottsdale resident Brooke Bessesen is the author and illustrator of the children's book Look Who Lives in the Desert!, a humorous-but-educational look at desert wildlife. It's available at all book retailers, including Gridleys of Fountain Hills.*

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## The Web

### NEELY'S DINER

by Crawford



Two mature trees can produce enough oxygen for a family of four.

That tree fact is one of dozens found at [www.treeinbox.com](http://www.treeinbox.com).

The site is the online store for Tree in a Box, a company that sells tiny tree-planting kits. The company suggests them as wedding favors, stocking stuffers and baby gifts.

The site is filled with interesting facts and

mythology about trees.

Such as, "The Greek god Adonis was said to have been born of a tree. He gave to humanity the strength of the woody core, the upward reaching soul of the sky-seeking branches, and a rooting deep within Mother Earth that ties our hearts to the center of the world."

Also, this: "Well placed trees can cut air conditioning costs 10 to 50 percent ..."

That's pretty cool.