Kids play the Darnedest things
KiDS
PLAY THE
DARDEST
THINGS
LM Riley and DM usually write about dead birds, but for this zine, they thought that they would write about the games that they played as children. LM Riley (pictured in the two photos on the top of the page) had a perm that she refused to brush.

DM (the two photos on the bottom of the page) would like you to know that in the photo on the left, the tub of popcorn is fake and that she is wearing Asics. In the photo on the left, DM is wearing makeup because she is a dog in a play. She is holding her dog. Neither are happy.

I’m taking a play therapy class & one of the things I’ve learned is that kids are capable of working out a lot of shit through play. So, you can enjoy reading about the games we played as kids while also playing arm chair psychologist.
PAINTING ROCKS

AGES 9—12?

In the year 2000 I painted rocks. Now, seventeen years later, rock painting has become a trend. Via the “Kindness Rocks Project” people paint rocks and leave them as a random act of kindness for others to stumble on. It is popular enough that recently Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin recommended the activity as a way to increase awareness and possibly stem the tide of the opioid epidemic. While I’m not sure if rock painting is that powerful, I do know that it was fun...

Regardless, back when I was in my middle school heyday of the art of rock illustration I didn’t give my rocks away. No. They were my art.

We had tons of different kinds of rocks in my backyard patio area. My parents had filled it in with a large variety of rocks. Some were fascinating, like river stones or like those shiny rocks you see near train tracks, and others were just gravel-kind. One of my favorite pass-times as a child was wandering this 15 foot area looking at rocks, bringing rocks in the house, and then whining when my mom put these treasured rocks back outside. Lifting up a bigger one that touched the earth’s surface could reward you with a worm or a roly-poly to look at.

At some point I began painting them. I usually liked painting animals on them, since as any pre-teen you’re probably obsessed with some sort of animal. My favorite animals at the time were cats, an animal I am actually allergic to and have never owned. I seemed to specifically paint big cats, as my BIG World-Ruining Film was The Lion King. Other than big cats, I mostly painted portraits of our family’s dogs.

I won prizes for some kind of general art category at the Madison county fair.
I got a picture of my tiger rock in my local paper, the Richmond Register, as I was a featured “artist of the month” at my local library. (Yes, my mom worked at the library. Their artist that month backed out at the last minute and they used me as a replacement. Obviously, I was just 12, and it’s not like I was some rock painting prodigy.) I was some kind of mixture of embarrassed and proud because I knew it was because of my connections (and luck) that I got this cool thing—what makes this one of the first instances of “good luck” and “connections” bringing about most of what I have. I’m grateful, even of the rock art show.

My parents still have the good rock paintings, but they’ve long since moved so my backyard rock collection is long gone. The pieces of rock art are hot glued to a piece of floral decorator’s foam covered in purple felt and hidden in a drawer somewhere. The ones that still survive are mostly portraits of the family dogs in rock form. My favorite dog’s geological illustration was taken from the earth where we dug her grave, in case you were worried I wasn’t always morbid. Dusty had a huge long nose and we found a rock that just happened to be perfectly the shape of her face. So I made a bit of a memorial portrait of her because that’s what you do when it’s the summer before 6th grade and your best (pet) friend dies.

I don’t know when I stopped painting rocks. I think I just moved on to comics and making up characters to live vicariously thru, then towards making my high school art teacher’s life hell, then towards an ill-advised interesting in painting, and finally

being firmly into printmaking now...

IDK, Maybe I should have stuck with the rocks.

Proof. Shameful

To be fair, the photographer directed me to pet my paper
Sonic the Hedgehog

She's one of those people now that you can't find on Facebook. So, I won't tell you her real name, but for now, we will call her K. K and I were friends when I was around probably 7 or 9 years old. I don't remember now we met, but we knew each other mostly through church. K's mom was pretty strict, and I remember K only ever watching old TV shows. K was probably the only child in the tri-state area who sincerely appreciated Gene Kelly in the 1952 hit "Singin' in the Rain."

I think her favorite movie was "Meet Me in St. Louis" (1944 in case you were wondering). One time she asked me if I wanted to watch "Peter Pan." (Note, not that one.) It was...not great. This also didn't apply to music, so K was also the area's youngest, and most serious Beatles fan.

"Hello, lovely," the version of "Hook." It was the one from 1960. If there were capital letters for numbers, that is exactly what I would be doing when I say 1960. I will also mention that it was mildly subversive in that Shakespearean way because Mary Martin played Peter Pan.
K and I shared two unlikely loves. Two wholesome things that K and I used as fuel for our imaginary games: SAMANTHA (the American Girl character) and (the TV show) GET SMART.

In her books, it is evident that Samantha is part of the ruling class. On a family jaunt to Teardrop Island, her family starts doing all of this real fucking picturesque shit like painting the rarefied scenery with watercolors (the good shit that comes out of tubes.) Honestly, I don't even know what happens to Samantha in this book. Really, K and I were just all about Teardrop Island.

We turned it into our own thing. And since K didn't really watch TV with actual villains, we would pretend we were on a journey to Teardrop Island & KAOS were hot on our trail. We would draw our own maps. I especially loved this because K had one of those art kits where the markers, colored pencils, and everything snapped into a plastic tray. We would run frantically enough to produce honest to god fear in us when we were escaping KAOS. Sometimes we would incorporate other games into Teardrop Island, like the infamous "floor is lava," or my personal fave, SPIES.

- Spies

1. Don't Wake Daddy was a popular board game at the time.
2. Remember how K's parents are strict? I think this is why this game was so fun.

Spies consisted of very few elements. Basically, we hid state, old Halloween candy around K's house during the day and then, after we were supposed to be asleep, we would sneak around her home retrieving our treats.

I don't think we ever had a name for this game, but when I explained this game to someone once, they knowingly responded, "You liked to play spies."

Whenever I think about K, I always imagine her in a big city. Sometimes when I think about here, I imagine how hardcore she must be now. People that don't do drugs seem to get weird in a way that is somehow more upsetting than just doing drugs. This is the logic I apply when I think about K's strict parents. Even my mom feared K's mom.

K's mom. One time we bought lottery tickets at the gas station. My mom informed me that Mrs. K could never know this. I once got a light scolding for selling Girl Scout cookies in church. I wonder if K turned out being trailed by KAOS, I wonder if she still sneaks around trying not to wake her parents.
different dogz together to make mixed breeds. I remember having a whole lineage of Labrador retrievers that via a genetic switch (that was built to happen sometime in the game when breeding) was a lovely peach color among many other curious genetic experiments. Obviously, breeding puppies and kittens wasn’t the purpose of the game, but it did make it more interesting.

In Petz 4 you would use a tiny music box to make the animals fall in love and huge heart would pop up and after a few days there would be a newborn puppy or kitten with the momma. I changed the clip the music box played to be the part of Will Smith’s song Miami where he says “Party in the city where the heat is on\ All night, on the beach till the break of dawn\ Welcome to Miami \ Bienvenidos a Miami”.

Why? Because 90’s.

Petz was the first example of game modding that I ever encountered. There was a huge online community and people would create changes in the code that allowed different ‘home made’ breeds of petz for the games or a mod that would allow dogz and catz to co-breed. The first time I ever really did anything interesting with a computer was because of this modding community. After researching how people were creating these petz modifications I tried to do one on my own. As a computer programmer and sys admin, my dad was so proud of me (for trying). Of course, I didn’t actually know what I was doing and never created a project that didn’t just crash my game.

By altering the hexadecimal codes more talented folks than I could create different color, pattern, shape, and size of animal. I remember seeing tons of wonderful different breeds of animals posted for download online. You’d be surprised at what could be accomplished from a template of connected colorful balls and the creative community that bloomed from these virtual animals.

In this way Petz was also my first taste of internet culture. Talented hexers would breed “litters” of different special Petz for
download and some even required you to "apply" to "adopt" indiviual game files. Yes, seriously. They expected you to email them and they would decide if you were responsible enough to take care of their hexed virtual pet. (I never got any of these seriously special petz because I didn't have an email address until I was a little older so I only ever dippled my toe in more freely accessible modifications.) Was it weird? Yes, but from all I remember this was all done for love and the excitement of creativity- it was a very encouraging community. Not to sound like an old whiner here, but there was no social media then and even posting artwork online was an annoying task unless you had your own website, so for young me, the internet was just Petz.

Today Ubisoft creates games under the Petz moniker but they're 3d fairly realistic versions of animals, not unlike Nintendo's Nintendogs. Games like that could never keep my attention very long, even a pretty good one like Nintendogs couldn't hold a candle to even Catz 1. If Ubisoft would publish even a passable port of the old P.F. Magic Petz games for my phone, I would have it in a heartbeat.

It was for the first of many times in my life that fun, technology, and arguably, art would intersect. It also mirrors a lot of what I do in my everyday life as my job as someone who works with computers. If I had kept pushing and had learned how to create hexed Petz, it would have been the same way I learned basic PowerShell: Figure out what you want to do, then learn how to do it. Be comfortable enough to just play around until you break it, or maybe once in a while, get it right.

Now excuse me, I need see if I can get this game from the 90's to work on Windows 10.
My friend Sarah and I would have slumber parties where we took all of our Beanie Babies and made them act out bizarre versions of the soap opera "Days of Our Lives." We hid this game from our friend Liza, and I have no idea why. Also, we were at a crossroads in our adolescence because we played this game while watching Dr. Drew and Undressed on MTV. This was a long time ago, but this is my imagined/partially remembered cast list: Roman Brady as Baldy the Eagle, Sam Brady as Host the Owl, Lucas Roberts as Bing the monkey, Austin Reed as Nuts the squirrel, Eric Brady as Tuffy the dog, Bo Brady as Kang the raccoon, and Alice Horton as Pollythe.
Ghosts, 8

When I was in elementary school I was friends with ghosts. They lived at my friend’s house and sometimes when I’d call her she’d put them on the phone and we’d talk. There were two of them, brothers, named Dave and Jase (Jason).

Obviously, she was teasing, right?

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I would talk to them on the phone quite a bit. I guess you could have considered them friends. I didn’t tell anyone else about it because IF they were real, it was something she and I had that no one else did. They weren’t mean spirited, they weren’t trying to scare me. We just talked about school and stuff. Sometimes about how they died, but I don’t remember any specifics other than I liked Dave better. They were just my dead teen friends.

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Or they were just my friend’s dead teen personalities. She just pretended to be ghosts because it was something to do. She was a few years older than me (during a time when that really mattered) so it’s hard to speculate the motivations of a 1997 era tween?

Thru the powers of the internet I was able to ask her about Dave and Jase.

It was the wish of finding something inexplicable and what I consider to be the creative child’s dream - the power of “belief” being able to make things real. I think we all have that somewhere deep inside- sometimes it’s magic, invisible friends, fairies, or aliens - for us it manifested as pleasant ghost stories.

Honestly, until our Facebook conversation she had never even hinted to me that they were fake... a little part of me has occasionally remembered them. In truth, I had always sort of wished they were real.

Yes, of course.

I’m still a creative child after all. And, hey, you’re supposed to believe in your friends - imaginary or not.