## Once upon a Garden City ...

All children grow up in families

I grew up in gardens

There were many

Large, small, manicured, and wild

Practical mini-orchards, vegetable farms

And unkempt grass with beautiful snakes

My grandmother's was typical, traditional Bangalore

Coconut trees for, um, coconuts

I was more interested in the fronds, the bracts, the inflorescences

They were building materials, they were boats, they were miniature trees

**Curry leaf! The soul of our cuisine** 

Aromas that come from the bruising

Tart, sweet, and astringent berries that left a strange aftertaste

And the trunk led up to the terrace, the only way to get there

Guava and sapota, to climb and pluck,

stomachaches from childish impatience gorging on unripe ones

Sitaphal bowed down with stony fruit

Was there a mango tree? I don't quite remember

No, those were other gardens

Hibiscus and Kanigle for the puja room

Kanakambra and Mallige for the girls' hair

The bougainvilleas were generous with blooms and thorns

In equal measure

And there was mud, glorious, glorious mud

What more could I ask for? A bucket of water, naturally

Streams, dams, villages to fashion or just mud pies and fights

Why would anyone call it dirt?

Your footprint was what you left in the soil,

Soon to be obliterated

The innocence was staggering

No talk of circular economies

**Or sustainability** 

No vocal for local

Or carbon credits

It just was

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