

Autobiographical piece

I don't remember much from my childhood. Things have blurred into a dull, ongoing timeline and I can't distinguish my fifth birthday from my ninth. I vaguely remember things like breaking my brother's arm, falling out with my friends and other similar traumatic experiences. I remember my first day of year seven in a new school, my first day of year six after moving to a new area and some things before that, but not much.

But something I do remember is going to Kids Club. Both my parents worked in a hospital in Central London, and we lived on the outskirts, in a place called Shirley, Croydon. My brother and I would be picked up by the Kids Club minibus after school every day and wait there for her until she finished work. We'd often go there in the holidays when both our parents also worked, when we'd go on days out.

The feelings I remember of this experience are mixed. I enjoyed it, since there were many things to do and there were a few people from my school who went there, but I didn't like spending time with unfamiliar people. I'd often sit in the corner alone with a book, or, if they were available, go on the computers to play games. This was about seven years ago, so the computers were quite old and slow. I remember playing Tetris, as well as other games. I remember reading a book about bacteria, and being put off nail-biting for life. I remember playing on the piano, not that I was particularly good at it. I remember watching people playing on the console, but I never got a go because I was too shy to ask. I remember having burnt toast, and being too scared to tell them I didn't like butter. I remember doing the washing up to the radio and drying the dishes. I remember trying to rollerblade and finding I absolutely couldn't, and ended up walking in them instead.

I remember one time especially well. I can't remember exactly what it was for, but we were making some kind of structure out of straws. I was cutting up the straws, and they were going everywhere, so I tried to shield them with my hand. Consequently, I ended up cutting into the bottom of my left index finger. Crimson blood spurted everywhere, all over my hands. Thank heavens I've never had a problem with blood. I winced with the pain, but I didn't cry out. I was embarrassed about what I had done, and I didn't want to tell the supervisors, but I knew I had to. When I eventually confessed, I was hot and sweaty from mortification, and I just wanted to die, irrational as it sounds. But it was fine; they got me a clean, clinical bandage and trussed my finger up nicely. To this day, I still have the scar, pale and iridescent on the bottom of my left index finger.

Needless to say, I do have good memories of Kids Club. I remember the animal man coming to visit. I remember holding a mouse, its fur as white and soft as snow, its small, beady eyes terrified. I felt some kind of kinship with it, since I was also small and somewhat scared of the world I inhabited. I held a snake the length of my arms, which admittedly wasn't very big. I was almost as small then as I am now. I remember the snake being quite heavy, but resting comfortably on my shoulders. I wasn't scared of it; I knew it wouldn't hurt me. Its scales were rough yet smooth, depending on how you brushed them. Its forked tongue darted in and out, tasting the air. Its ebony black eyes stared defiantly out at me.

I had quite an eventful childhood now I think about it. And I can remember more things than I thought I would. Sometimes, though, it's better to forget than to rake over painful memories. Some things are best left in the past.