

## **Childhood memories**

### **By Melissa Chahal**

I remember my mum's wonderful bedroom which until my brother was born, was in the second bedroom. There were cotton floral curtains; I can still picture myself lying on the soft maroon satin bed covers staring at them, trying to follow the repetitive pattern. Every evening, I would tiptoe and peer through the net curtains, trying to see over the various matching houses. I was smaller than other children so I would climb onto the peeling white panel, and then open the window but never too wide. I'd see the elegance of the outside world, the breeze flowing into the warm room and spreading through my soft dress and hearing the hustle of cars and people echoing through the streets. The sky would be a gentle blue and white canvas, with small birds blotted across it. I'd stare for hours, until one of my parents would walk in, when I'd go crashing to the soft maroon carpet, trying to look as innocent as possible.

The dark wooden dressing table standing on scarred wooden panels against the far wall was a canvas of scents trapped in glass bottles, oil of Olay and endless lipsticks. I'd get up early, clutching my new favourite teddy of the day, taken from the top of the curtain pole where my mum kept a collection from her ventures to Disney land and her own childhood, just to watch her get ready. She'd always wear the same perfume which is still in her bedroom to this day; Chanel No. 5, smelling sweetly of abstract flowers, wrapped in gold and black glass. To finish, she would add a bright lipstick, always either dark berry, fiery red or pink. Glancing at me, she'd tell me not to take too long getting ready, kiss me on the forehead and move towards the large smooth reflective wardrobe to choose what she would wear for the day. I'd stare into the dusty three way brown framed mirror, staring at the lipstick mark, wondering whether if I would ever look quite as beautiful as her.

Her room had an added privilege: there was actually a key in the lock. One day, I wanted to privately explore her draws and try out her lipsticks in peace so it seemed justified to lock the solid wooden door behind me. Naturally, the key broke. Thinking nothing of it, I sat on the plush pink seat and applied a berry coloured lipstick as symmetrically as possible. When I'd been applying more and more as the minutes ticked by on her old back and gold alarm clock, mum must have noticed I was being unusually quiet. I heard her footsteps creeping through the locked door and she shouted as loudly as she could when she realised what I had done. I tried to explain, blinded with confusion and the fright of being locked in such an enclosed space. I just sat in the furthest corner, shaking and crying. When my dad returned, he broke the door down, and my parents' anger vanished when they realised what I had been doing. My mum took a photograph of my berry filled face.

Up until the age of around of four, night after night I would creep into my parents' bedroom and lie at the foot, soothed by their presence. One night, my dad actually though I was ill so I was awoken by the cold surface of a stethoscope against my back. Three concerned faces were watching me sleep; my parents and a strange doctor wearing a big white call out coat. They never did tell me what the problem was.

At the ripe age of five, a new charming character was added into our family. My brother was truly wonderful; quiet and reserved therefore very different from me. A mum bought a stunning giant lace white cot for him to sit and stare at the brightly coloured cow-jumped-over-the-moon mobile as I had done so many years before, trying to make sense of it. I was very protective over him. I would sit next to him on the satin bed and watch him dressed in a pale blue onesie with small brown bears stitched on, as he spoke on the retro cream telephone to a mute receiver on the other end. I never knew what he was saying but it didn't matter to me. I thought no one in the world could compare.