

Imagined Histories

A collection of fabulous tales by

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Being Paralent

S : Tonight i feel like i am dying. Its not painful. I just feel like i am dying.

R: *What do you mean?*

Tell me more.

What you mean about dying?

Come on man tell me what you mean?

S: Well. Im not quite at the point of submission to the inevitable. I still have vague hopes and apparently still some minor needs. In retrospect I see how naive I have been about so much. The reality of where i find myself now in CR is so different from the innocent adventure it started out to be.

The joy of my day today was to go shopping for food. There is that. Kitty looks content in Alans lap. There is that. The cicadas have ceased their sundown scream. The no-seeuums have retreated and Im on my final episode of Netflix's latest fashion extravaganza 'Next Fashion'. Whats to live for?

R: *So you are depressed.*

Or content and depressed.

Are you giving up on the casa casita.

How much vodka you have had tonight.

Should I be worried about you? This is heavy.

Please hello.

Do you carry a piece of paper with phone numbers of the people who care about you? So we can get notified and claim your body.

Ok. All I can do is hope you are ok and extend sympathy and empathy and tell you "beautiful videos."

And remind you that it's totally ok to change plans, or take longer than you meant to take. Or whatever. Sell the land and just rent. Sell your other house and become a traveler. Explore. Settle in. Whatever feels right. You have life to live and food to eat.

S: Dont worry.

R: *Ha! "I'm dying. Don't worry."*

I worry you will die in the bathtub like Whitney Houston.

S: It rained the day before yesterday. It rained last night. It looks like it will rain today.

R: *There is a fine sense of continuity, acceptance. Not contentment, not exactly, but not not contentment*

It had rained the day before the previous day. It had rained the night before this day. It looked like it was going to rain the next day. Was he content? No. But neither was he not content. He was parallel to content.

S: He was paralent.

By comparison its very quiet today. There are the sounds of birds and cicadas, and cars and motorcycles, but the wind is breathless and the clouds are stagnant and slightly grey. Another day is going by.

R: It's time to start your new back story, in this new one your father was a butcher and your mother taught piano and singing in your home. She had a grand piano and made you wash your hands before touching it, and she let you clean the keys with milk. Your father never wanted you to work at the butcher shop because he didn't want you to grow up a butcher, but you were fascinated and loved to sneak in there at night and look at the meats in the case and cooler. You were a beloved only child. Your earliest memories are of your mother singing to you.

S: No sitting on a roof staring towards a water tower in the distance?

R: Well of course that's part of it!

S: I so miss cleaning the piano keys with milk.

R: Awww, was that a special memory? What about the smell of salami and the shadows of the salami hanging in the store room.

S: At a distance I used to hold up my finger to the silhouette of the salami against the dull light bulb to try and judge if the salami was moving at all or if it was just my imagination that I heard one bump into another in the darkness.

R: Oh my god! You are kind of a genius! I am now totally convinced by this memory. Is it a real memory? How can you do this? What about when you hid in the basement and listened to your mother teaching piano or teaching singing. Muffled through the floor. The smell of linseed oil and potting soil?

S: It wasn't me who hid in the basement. I think it was you. I was taller than you even tho i was younger. Once you hit your head on the beam as you ran down the stairs. You put some of the linseed oil on the bump but it didn't help. The only thing that soothed you was your humming to the tune upstairs on the piano.

R: Oh yeah, that's right! You hid in the pantry.

S: I didn't know you knew. How refreshing to know at this age that you were there with me, in thought, and in love.

R: Yes, I knew, because sometimes you would bring me a cracker you had snuck out of the pantry. You would have it in the pocket of your navy blue cardigan, and it would have some navy blue lint stuck on it, with the bits of salt.

S: Do you remember? We took those licorice spirals and dipped them in the salt?

R: That was with the lady next door. The one who smelled of camphor. The one whose hands trembled slightly, and we would try to tremble just like she did, once we were home.

It had to be a slight tremble - not too pronounced, but noticeable. Like a fern shaking off dew.

S: When there wasn't any licorice we took the maple syrup and sprinkled it with shredded coconut. I remember it trickled down your bottom lip when I poured it into your mouth with the tablespoon, and you laughed and laughed and splattered the handle of the broom with the syrup and coconut. It was so sticky we couldn't get it off even with vinegar!

I'm trembling now just like we did then mimicking the lady next door. We could have done a tremble shadow show. But it didn't matter we didn't, we were loved and loved anyway. We are so lucky.

R: *Yes!!! I totally remember that maple syrup coconut thing now! I want to make some. You moved to Samara 26 years ago and became a cobbler. You still make huaraches (sandals) for the gringos out of a tiny shop near the beach and every morning you walk there barefoot.*



I am living vicariously through my own fiction.

S: This morning she lay on her stomach, her back bare with the sheet drawn about her waist. In her sleep she reached over and lay her hand on my shoulder, her fingertips curled towards the canopy, her nails still crusted with the dirt from the seedling planting we did yesterday. Maybe today we will barely speak again, and when we do it will be barely above a whisper and quite hoarse. Im so satisfied we moved here. The land and the people seem to have accepted us, we smile at them and them at us, neither knowing anything about each others past or where we want to be in the future. Now she has moved her hand, her fingers curling inwards. A smile blooms across her mouth as she opens her eyes slightly, then she is asleep once more, her body rising barely with each silent breath. I beg for another day with her, and another after that.

R: Is that about the Hungarian woman who came into your cobbler shop for sandals, you held her foot in your lap to measure it and your eyes met for a moment?

S: The shop is really just a slight hollow in a thick wall that once surrounded the Catholic church on the main street that runs parallel to the sea. I made a door out of off-cuts from the wood mill up the street away. Its easily opened by anyone with a little determination. Its worked for 20 years as a marker defining what is mine and not yet theirs. which is all I need really. Thats how I came upon her one morning. She was peering through the slats, bent over and intent. I didn't know she was Hungarian at the time and she rarely said anything about her childhood only to say she had been a happy child and bore no bitterness towards those who had tried to harm or take advantage of her later in life.

R: Are you making this up or copying it from somewhere? I have a slightly vertigous feeling that it's true, or becoming true. Maybe the past is just a story we tell ourselves and changing it is as easy and changing the story

S: I am living vicariously through my own fiction.

‘maybe the past is just a story changing it is as easy as changing the story?’

I think that is at least to some angular degree, the basis for behavior modification theory. However some would say that the transformative effects of retelling could be traumatic in and of themselves, or perhaps even more so, transport one to live entirely in fantasy, where the intrusion of trauma are barricaded simply by giving them no validity in fact.

R: That's good. Very good. Can you tell me more about the Hungarian?

S: Most people don't know and fewer yet realize I don't measure people's feet to make their sandals. It might appear so when I take their foot and nestle it in my lap, or when sometimes I will make some innocuous sound that sounds like approval or understanding. But people don't know I am charting the contours of their soles, or their arches, of their toes. Some people have photographic memory, a snapshot of names or numbers they can repeat by exact replication of their original impression. I have 3 dimensional memory similar to the photographic memory of others. My memory has texture and weight. It has form and contrast. When I held her foot in my lap and our eyes met for that briefest of moments, it wasn't the spark of romance that spluttered. It was the surge of contact, the moment when her data flowed towards me to the point where I almost gasped at the clarity of her image and had to pause for a moment. I have imagined many feet at the store over the years and there are few that I would want to recreate or linger upon. I asked her once if she was aware of her uniqueness, if she knew how innocent her feet were. But she simply said she bathed them in a mixture of lavender, glycerine and pomegranate every night after her shower just as she had seen her mother do even after her father had died.

We never spoke about religion. To this day I don't know what her religious beliefs were, or if she had been exposed to any as a child. Once when we reached the crest of a hill, as we stood peering at the horizon ahead, she quietly said, "It wasn't God speaking, it was just pigeons cooing in the rafters." I turned to her to enquire further, now curious, but I could tell she wasn't going to say anything more as she had closed her eyes momentarily and was swaying ever so slightly as if in a gentle vortex. We slept well that night.

My parents never loved each other. Their relationship seemed to be the fruits of coincidence rather than that of understanding. Their relationship with their children bore the same unremarkable but significant contours of trust. When as a child I sometimes appeared to be torn between choices, or battered by circumstance, my father would say, "Everything will be ok. You are safe here. You are a good child", to which my mother would add an affirmative murmur.

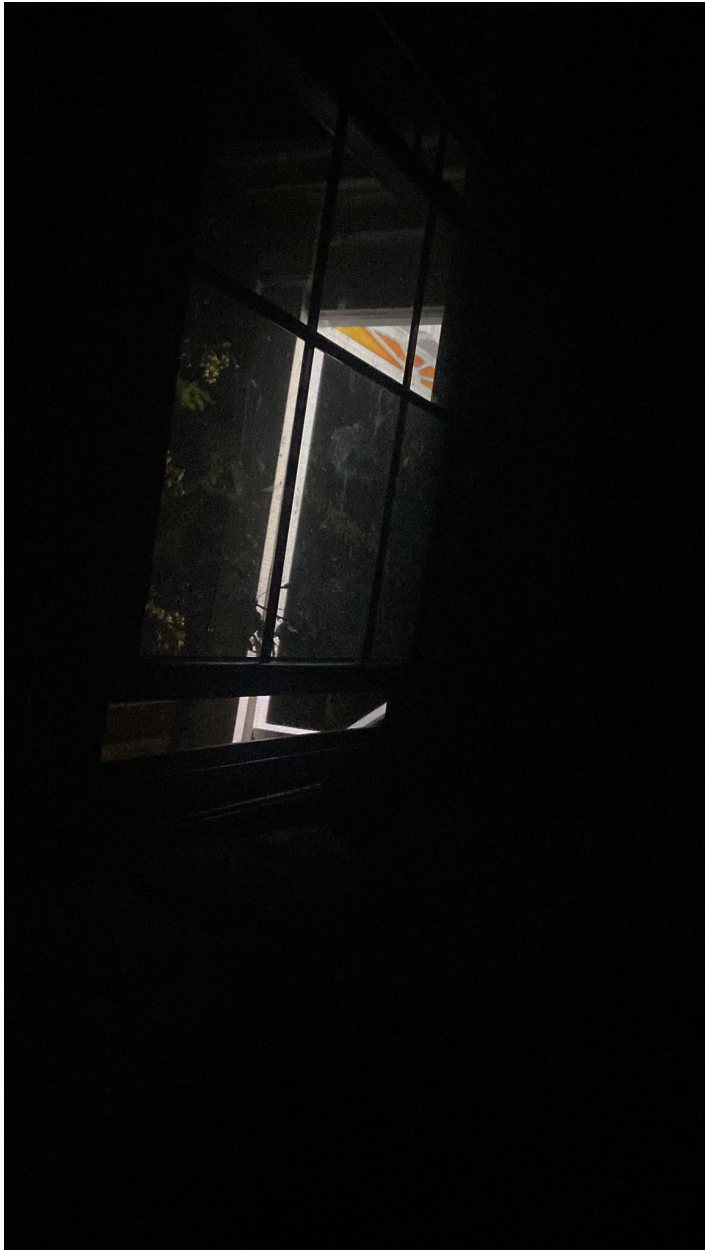
It was within that cocoon of trust and acceptance that I came to know others and how I brought her into myself, glowing with that magic of coincidence.

R: Wait, is this your actual childhood? I thought they loved each other and your father loved your mother's voice. I guess that's just how it seemed to me when my mother would leave me with your family and go out of town for a weekend which would often stretch into 5 days or even, once, 2 weeks. Your family seemed perfect and I loved being included in the sabbath dinner and Passover and I still remember your mother, in an apron and a stylish dress, wearing canvas sneakers, with a large kerchief on her head, explaining kosher to me and showing me her sets of dishes. The meat. The dairy. Those were for

special days. The every day were in the cupboards over the counter. The dairy dishes were in the lower cupboard to the left of the sink. The meat dishes were around the corner, in a tall wooden cabinet, hidden behind wooden doors. I remember thinking how “handsome” your mother was. Pretty and even face, in the dress and the Canvas sneakers, she seemed confident and cheerful.

You showed me how to make cinnamon toast, toast your bread, spread margarine on it, sprinkle it with cinnamon, sprinkle it with sugar, from two special shakers. Then the melted butter would absorb the sugar and cinnamon, and it would start to look like slushy, dirty snow

But maybe your parents just seemed happy to me because they never fought, and could be happy in the same room together. My parents could barely even greet each other when they exchanged the kids at holidays. But your mother was always so cheerful.



Chapter 3

The girl who hid in the kitchen closet.

S : Your father was my secret hero. So swarthy and mysterious. The few times I caught a glimpse of him as he backed his car from our driveway, his head turned, his neck thick and wrinkled, were images I held clearly for many years. The way he asked if you were sure you had packed everything you wanted because if you hadn't he would return to get them for you, I knew he had to be kind and cared about you intensely, so much so he could never tell you in words. Looking into your eyes as he held your chin to kiss you goodbye on the forehead, his feeling for you rose in his throat, throttling any sound and almost suffocating him. I saw this from a distance, leaning on the front door, sliding one bare foot along the frame, I was always both surprised and overjoyed at your visits. We loved having you be in our house. You always said funny things, or you would laugh to the point of tears and we would join you until we all collapsed in the mellowness of the joy you brought us. And when that happened, the image of the back of your fathers neck as he reversed down the driveway would appear to me and I knew the source of your joy and contentment. He was my hero, your dad was.

R: Aw damn! That's making me cry. Makes me miss him but so glad I had him for a father.

S: Your mother and mine were kindred spirits. Both were so enamored with endless enthusiasm for the possibilities of their lives. So much so they couldn't help but exclude anyone who didn't coincide with their enchantment. It wasn't the conclusions of judgement, or of jealousy, or of fear, or many other emotions or thoughts that might have caused others to ignore friends or family. They simply had their own volition that couldn't be denied. Thats how you came to be with us, the girl who hid in the kitchen closet so she could hear the sound of the dishes being washed without distraction. The one who wasnt afraid of climbing through the hole in the fence that led to the field next to our house even though you had caught your long curled hair in the wire more than once. I guess we must have been in love then.

R: The first true friendship of childhood, when someone else sees you and you belong, outside of your family, more than your family.

S: I fell in love with the girl next door when I was 5.

R: Tell me about her!

S: The girl next door was Brenda, the elder sister of Sharon. Brenda's hair was black like that of the mane of a wild mare. Her eyebrows were closely knit above her emerald and hazel eyes, while her cheeks hinted at a slight haze of darkness that in later years when she was somewhat older and pubescent, would grow even darker, eventually leading to a hint of a mustache above her thick upper lip and an even darker furrow of long silky hair leading to the triangle of desire i would never know in any other way than at a distance.

R: *Fiction or fact?*

Bro? You ok? You ok!

Have you ever been to Ghana

What if that was the last thing you wrote and then you died and I never find out if it was memory or fiction? What if Heide killed you? Or is it Hanna?

Anyway just wondering.

Maybe you have no internet?



The suspicion of memory.

S : Sometimes it is easier to verbally explain something like the discords of fantasy than to write about them. How sometimes it may not be possible to explain in written words. As hard as one might try to formulate a positive alternative to the reality as you knew it, an alternative simply doesn't come to mind. The other day in a conversation the explanation was so simple. Two or three sentences I now cant remember were so clear they left no residue besides leaving a trace of having existed somehow in a vacuous bubble of no definition other than the suspicion of memory, the inflection of reflection, the vicissitudes of time.

Perhaps its because what one saw as cruelty or lack of kindness or compassion were simply frail intrusions on the invincibility of the choice of ones own direction, ones own volition. People witness what might be so unimaginable to another, yet they are able to continue and even, perhaps, smile, while others simply dissolve in the face of the force and leap into the fire of their own accord.

The lack of the ability to imagine cruelty or depravity in simply physical terms is perhaps the crucial fulcrum for the inversion of the force of hate, or jealousy, or just simple cruelty. Why is there no release in imagining hate as love. Or is there release but it comes rather in accepting hate as hate, that trying to transform hate into love is a exercise in futility. Some see hate as love and dont know it as anything other. They are sometimes serial killers.

R: Do you guys remember?

S: I bumped into your father in a store the other day. He didn't recognize me. The weight of the past almost kept me moving forward with my cart of yogurt and salami's. But I stopped and called out to him. I changed the course of circumstance in that moment. It would have been so easy to let the liquid of presumption and survival envelope me. He looked back, and obviously not recognizing or seeing me, continued pushing his forward his cart with packages of raw black beans and olives. I called his name again, with that same tone of fondness I used to express to him all those years until we lost contact in the maelstrom of hypocrisies and misunderstandings that wrapped us all at one point. "Papa! Papa! It's me Papa. It's me!"

R: *That's sad! Maybe it's his hearing. Also he has cataracts. He really shouldn't be driving. Just as likely that he was ignoring you, though. He has retreated from the past and any memory of real connection with anyone except his priest and his god.*

S: I could see he was having trouble driving the shopping cart. He side swiped a tower of paper towels when he turned.

R: *Did it fall over? Did you bend down and pick them up for him while he apologized vaguely and walked away, leaving you there on the floor?*

S: They didn't fall over. A couple teetered at the top but balanced themselves. It was just a glancing blow. But. If they had fallen his apology would have simply been a lie. And i would have been left, prostrate and impotent on the floor once more. You remember those times dont you? He pulled your hair once. He used to pinch your cheek so hard I sometimes thought you had run into a branch of the fig tree in the yard.

R: *Nobody else ever saw those times.*

S: I did. Through the hole in the fence.

R: *The first time he let me pick the figs by myself he refused to tell me how to know if they are ripe. He told me I would figure it out. I had a terrible reaction to the unripe fig I ate. My mouth felt full of needles. As if I had bitten into a cactus, like a character in the cartoons. Papa laughed until he coughed on his own phlegm. Then laughed some more. "Pick it when it feels so soft you think it's rotten" he said*

S: I remember the white milk from the broken stem used to itch like crazy.

R: *Like a crazy man!*

S: His love for you and sometimes others had a perversity I still cant understand or explain. He took your head in a vice like hold and proceed to lick your face and especially your eyes with his thick and heavy cigarette smelling saliva followed by a hard rubbing of the bristle of his 2 day old beard all over until your face was beet red and you didn't know wether to cry or scream or just be silent and endure and accept that this was the only way he knew how to express his feelings for you. It happened one day when he pretended ti okay cricket with me and you had caught the ball, so proud and lovely holding it to your chest like a cup of cherries.

R: *Good story! Tell me the one about the ice cream.*

S: Your mom took us to the zoo. It was one of those rare occasions she was able to lift herself out of the orbit of your fathers damnation and obsession with her character. Somehow her dreams and impulses coincided and we landed on the back of a large female elephant who lumbered along a few pathways, head and ears flopping side to side. We were in sort of metal cradle, our legs and your black patent leather shoes poking out the sides. And then. The 3rd ball, half licked of its colored sprinkles fell off the cone landing dead center in your lap!

R: *Yes!!! That's the story I meant. The smell of the elephant is still vivid in my mind. Not a bad smell at all.*

S: And elephants are so hairy too. You said to me, “Ooo, its so hairy. Not smooth like i thought it was from a distance. I like it. It feels like a horse. I like horses. They look so sad.”

R: *I said horses look sad?*

S: Yes, thats what you said. I think you might have meant deep but i dont think i would have known what that meant either.

R: *Oh ok, that makes more sense. Or maybe I was feeling sad that day. I remember thinking horses were more intelligent than humans. And wishing we would go back to horse and carriage days. It would solve pollution and give people jobs shoveling the streets.*

S: No wonder you are not a Tesla fan. They dont look anything like a horse and carriage and neither does Elon Musk who is a South African.

R: *That pasty faced fat head.*

S: Ive been thinking about your life experience with the idea of ‘community’. How it seems you are disappointed in others, how you feel somehow ‘cheated’ of your place at the table, how you finally condemn yourself to your fate for the lack thereof. Your parents, Your siblings, Your family. It seems that acknowledgement of the presence of oneself by others is the starting point of community. Unless you're trying to sneak into a movie without paying, then its helpful.

R: *Explain?*

S: This was so long ago I cant explain. I dont remember what I was thinking that many weeks ago.

R: *It's been months!!*

S: Even months ago. And it doesn't matter any more. I miss remembering our trip to the zoo. How wobbly it was on the back of the elephant, and you went ‘woooah’ with a big smile, you weren't frightened at all, it was like you were surfing. But I was frightened and your joy was contagious. Do you even remember how we got off? How the elephant knelt down in front and we slid down its side to the waiting arms of the 2 handlers?

R: *I don't remember that at all!!! I just remember the smell of the elephant, which I quite liked. And I liked the hairs in his coarse skin. You didn't act frightened.*

Sherwin Mark: Jeepers, I was so scared. My little scrotum was all puckered up!

Rachel: *Poor little guys! What scared you? The height or the beast*

S: It was the wobbliness. The side to side. The back and forth. Maybe i thought i would fall off. But you were there next to me having a jolly good time!

R: *Yes! It was fantastic! I thought some how that the elephant had a special bond with me. I used to think of myself as someone who communicated with animals on a deeper level. I had a lot of fears - like terror of really old cars and horse drawn carriages (if they were in neglected condition), fear of heights, fear of the dark, fear of ghosts, fear of talking to people I didn't know, but no fear of elephants or horses or big dogs. I think if*

I knew you were scared I wouldn't have felt so confident. You put up a big act of confidence!

