

## I REMEMBER

I remember my first memory of my mother coming to get me in the morning because I would be flipping the light switch on and off from my crib.

I remember the first photograph of myself that I remember seeing. Our Labrador and I were sharing a chew toy.

I remember "Rubber ducky, you're the one!"

I remember kick-the-can.

I remember when Captain Planet convinced me to recycle.

I remember my mom telling me I'd grow out of the whole wanting my bathroom to be decorated in rubber yellow duckies.

I remember picking meadow tea in the backyard.

I remember finding a bird that had been attacked by a cat in the yard one day. Nana told me that we didn't have enough money to take him to the vet. The bird died. I still hate cats.

I remember our dog Spunky, and that my dad accidentally ran her over with his car on Memorial Day.

\*

I remember pickle jars full of fireflies.

I remember buttercup flowers, and that if you rubbed them on your neck and they left a yellow mark, it meant that you liked butter.

I remember secretively wiping my boogers on the desks and crayon boxes of kids I didn't like.

I remember "I know you are, but what am I?"

I remember that my Sunday school had a plastic birthday cake that they would bring out and put candles on whenever somebody had a birthday.

I remember playing card games with my grandmother, and that she had these little plastic discs to put the cards in, so you could fan them out and see them all at once.

I remember that Transformers were way better than GoBots.

I remember when, after watching a *Crocodile Hunter* marathon, my dad and I spoke like Australians for three days.

I remember accidentally dropping a GI Joe into an exposed sewer pipe, and never seeing him again.

\*

I remember everything was always tan and dusty. The walls, the stairs, the windows.

I remember the emptiness of the house, the want of furniture, the possibilities.

I remember dragging a pink crayon across the mortar between the bricks of our fireplace to make it look pretty.

I remember wishing that the monsters in my closet and under my bed were real.

I remember playing pretend beneath my shield of bed sheets and wooden chairs.

I remember inventing traps to stop robbers and planning elaborate escape routes.

I remember that evening, in front of the dying fire, yelling at my neighbor for sounding too much like the robbers when she said "aint'," and not enough like the damsels in distress.

I remember the neighbor girl and I liked to mix the flavors together. In the mud.

I remember the little smile on both of our faces, reflected in a puddle of rainwater, as we snuck off with beers from the basement refrigerator to our "chemistry lab."

I remember the coloring paper we got from dad's office in the house. It had holes down both sides and folded over on itself.

I remember missing the house and my imaginings more than the friendship.

\*

I remember smelling the cinnamon on the Moravian cake I took over to the house when people suddenly appeared there.

I remember my grandfather taking me for haircuts at Kermit's barbershop, across the street from his house. Kermit was a small man, and nearly bald, but warm and kind. He would always give me a handful of hard, pink gumballs wrapped in paper. They didn't really taste good.

I remember taking fluoride pills to help protect my teeth.

I remember Lebanon bologna and peanut butter sandwiches on wheat bread. The peanut butter would always stick to the roof of my mouth.

I remember kindergarten and getting in the milk line at lunch, and making sure I was always first so that I got chocolate milk and not 2%.

I remember a dream where I opened a container of sour cream. I was arrested by the police because opening sour cream in a moving vehicle is against the law. I went to jail and woke up laughing.

\*

I remember the first time I met a Jewish person. It was in the third grade. I had expected a wise and mystical being, like an elf, or Yoda, but he was really very boring.

I remember meeting a real live Indian and feeling horribly guilty for being white.

I remember Mr. Wakefield's garden. He would cut the hard-to-reach grass around the edge of the house with a pair of nail-clippers, bending over with his gut spilling out of his shirt like sour milk. Sweating and swearing, he polished the gnomes and gave them names, as if they were his children.

I remember the gang war, in Rolling Hills, when I was 7, and my mom holding me below the windows because of gunfire. We moved the following week.

I remember coloring a house in front of the fireplace. I remember adding a cat to the house because I knew my mom liked cats. She still has the picture hanging in her office.

I remember my mom threatening to "take away Christmas."

I remember my mom then threatening to "take away Christmas . . . FOREVER!"

I remember moving back to my mother's, hello Pottstown!

I remember when Mom came home from her first appointment with the shrink. She hung up a list of what she wanted out of life on the refrigerator door with two banana magnets. I don't remember when life became a grocery store where you get to pick and choose and cross things out.

I remember my mom losing her hair.

I remember being amazed by how the wig looked exactly like her normal hair.

I remember the red burnt auburn brown coloring.

I remember that my mother is the reason I am alive today.

I remember I still am.

\*

I remember long periods during the summer spent at my grandma's house. My cousin and I would shrivel like prunes in the swimming pool and lose track of the day of the week, the month, everything.

I remember the sidewalk was like a cluster of islands.

I remember finding a penny from 1917 in the broken concrete and realizing there was a "time" between me and the dinosaurs—that things actually happened.

I remember getting my head stuck in the metal fence behind her house. I thought I was going to be stuck there forever, that people would come from all over the world and pay to see me, like in one of those freak shows. The neighbor tried to cut me out with a hacksaw, later resorting to slathering my ears with butter.

I remember that Mom and Nana stood to the side and took pictures.

I remember when the slide of my trombone froze mid-parade. Next year, when it didn't freeze, I pretended it did so that I wouldn't have to play the stupid songs.

\*

I remember screaming "I HATE YOU" from my house.

I remember answering the doorbell to find a bouquet of dandelions on my doorstep.

I remember he had a Coal Chamber sticker on his binder. He was cute and quiet and another newbie so I instantly bought a Coal Chamber tape and listened to it constantly till I'd memorized a song or two. They were awful, but I forced myself to like the tape so that we could have something in common.

I remember the first time that I held hands with a girl. In the audience at a school production of *Oklahoma*. First, we touched pinkies, and by the end of the act, we were holding hands.

I remember "Dave, are you going to kiss me or what?"

I remember I was super classy about it, it happened behind a barn at the local farmers fair.

I remember it smelling like cows when our lips touched.

I remember him not knowing what to do.

I remember being kissed for the first time and wishing I was all alone on the moon looking down at me kissing him back. I wanted to be anywhere but where I was.

\*

I remember my first wet dream. I remember being a little scared when I woke up.

I remember going through two condoms, because I put the first one on wrong, from being so nervous.

I remember realizing that I had no clue what was happening.

I remember throwing up in his yard and stumbling home through the playground of Greenacres Park in the damp greyblue morning.

I remember playing kickball there when I was a little girl.

I remember how it wasn't as big of a deal as I thought.

I remember her saying "You popped your cherry?!" and thinking that sounded so cliché.

I remember we did it again in January, just to make things official.

I remember remembering that time.

I remember blood in the snow, and realizing things definitely *were* official.

\*

I remember 10th grade, the Trappe YMCA, and Garry Schmotlzie of Holly Drive taking me to my first hardcore show, with First Blood playing in his R32.

I remember showing up at the Trappe, and Garry saying all right, tonight, you learn to dance.

I remember being so stoned during graduation, I messed up shaking Governor Rendell's hand and tripped over the mic stand.

I remember my first college party, in the Cliffs, and being so trashed, I slept at one of the defensive lineman's house, because I would've been arrested if I had gone back to the dorms.

I remember thinking there'd be cliffs there. Nope. There wasn't.

\*

I remember walking home alone after a school play that neither of my parents had come to.

I remember lying on my trampoline at night and looking up at the stars. Every now and then, an airplane would cross the sky.

I remember finding out John Lennon was dead twenty years after it had actually happened, and crying.

I remember realizing how much I love my mom and dad, so much that it hurt to think about it, and how it made me feel safe and scared at the same time.

I remember feeling so lucky knowing that I could eventually get to go home.

I remember crying for the people who couldn't.

I remember a lot, just faded memories that keep me up at night, and how I'd wish they'd stop, so I could get to sleep.

—by Alice Fischer, Nikki Guldin, Ian Marcheskie, Jeremy Sayer,  
Table Studzienko & Sam Wilbert