

MUMs—Made-Up Memories

MUMS. Made Up Memoirs. My best girl and I first coined the term when I “co-opted” some of her life story. Not major memories. I would never, say, remember sleeping with her boyfriend, which I never did, to set the record straight. No, a MUM is a small mis-remembrance that is very real to the MUM’s owner. I may “remember” my best girl’s favorite movie, as she described it to me so often. Recently I discovered that the ability to have MUMs is inherited.

“Member,” my three year old daughter Pascale says. She has not mastered the entirety of the word remember. “Member when the trains came into the house?”

In writing for a memoir class I was told I was to record memories to illuminate a truth; to bear witness to history and my accounts of events. If I do not write my memories there is a chance that someone else will create a cartoonish version of my reality. My toddler senses there were trains in her room. We laugh and unimaginatively pat her petite head. This frustrates her and she crosses her arms in front of her chest and actually says, “hhmph.” She lacks authority, so we do not believe her. I too have an early memory that *my* mother maintains did not happen. I believed that my mother forgot my birthday when I was thirteen. But, I have a built in witness, a twin sister who will swear that this possible MUM is factual. Did we fall into a twin-mind-think, a mutual folie dex deux?

And what of my toddler that lacks this sibling observer? She has no twin sister. Who will be witness to her memories except us, and whose interpretation of those reminiscences will be correct—a thirty-something mom that has enough life experience to filter the situation, or a three year old for whom

the world is full of marvel. A child who reports every little detail that she sees with such poetry that her observations should not be doubted. A child who has not yet learned to lie to achieve her means, who's reportage of events is as straightforward as she can muster the language skills.

When given a food that she does not like, she says, "They are the wrong size for my tummy."

When seeing an automatic door for the first time she notes, "that door has a lot of energy."

Both comments are valid and factual, so why should I doubt the trains? Sadly, this same frankness is what leads the child to publicly comment on indelicate items.

"Mommy that woman's hair is falling off," she says upon seeing a woman adjust her wig in a dressing room.

Now Pascale says to me, "member the trains?" This has been a bedtime delay tactic so I question its authenticity. Tonight, I play along.

"When did the trains come into your room?" I ask.

"When the kitchen was broken and there were trains in the house. That was scary," she says.

Aha. Every MUM springs from a grain of truth. We recently gutted our kitchen. There were gray men and gray machines banging on pipes and sawing through walls. It must have seemed incredibly train-like to a napping child.

So I have come to the conclusion that my daughter is correct. There were trains. I either did not see them or did not have the capacity to process the account, but trains there were, in the form of men of machines invading her slumber. Her first real MUM.

I'm so proud.

Lockie Hunter lives in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts with her toddler Pascale and baby Graham; you may find out more about her and her writing at www.lockiehunter.com.