

**A.R. HOPWOOD'S  
FALSE MEMORY ARCHIVE ANTHOLOGY:  
VOLUME 1**

© 2016. A.R. Hopwood.

All Rights Reserved. Any unauthorised broadcasting, public performance, copying or re-recording will constitute an infringement of copyright.

A digital edition published by WITH ([withyou.co.uk](http://withyou.co.uk))

*For my Mum and Dad*

“False memory refers to circumstances in which we are possessed of positive, definite memories of events - although the degree of definiteness may vary - that did not actually happen to us”

Charles J. Brainerd, Valerie F. Reyna (Eds.). *The Science of False Memory*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 2005.

# **THE ANTHOLOGY**

## PRE-BIRTH

My Dad feels like he remembers the great smogs in London in 52 but he wasn't born until 1958. I feel like I remember Live Aid 85 but I wasn't born until August 1985, one month afterwards!

(...)

I remember falling of a merry-go-round, but my mum said that it happened to my sister before I was even born. Strangely enough, I have the exact same scar that she has from the accident, but my parents have no idea how I got it.

(...)

For years I insisted that I clearly remembered my parents' wedding. I remember what I was wearing, what my parents looked like and what we had for dinner. I was born 4 years after my parents got married.

(...)

I was born in 1979 in Australia, and in 1980 we moved back to the UK to Coventry in the West Midlands, and I grew up there. I have a memory of sitting in a pram beside the construction site of the new Coventry Cathedral - it's half built, with scaffolding everywhere. My mum is there, wearing a long green dress. The new cathedral was built between 1951 and completed in 1962, 17 years before I was born.

(...)

I remember a lovely holiday on the Isle of Anglesey with my family: my father, mother, four older sisters and myself, the youngest, stayed near to the beach. We'd rented a cottage and I shared a room with my sisters, just as we did at home.

It was many years later I realised that my family had taken this holiday before I was born...

(...)

I have a very strong memory of watching Battersea station burning down. I stood at the window in the back room downstairs in my pyjamas in the dark.

The railway embankment ran across the end of our back yard and close to the house, so I was looking up to my left. Being young, I often watched trains passing and never tired of it. The shock of this fire had a lasting effect on me, as it was so close to the house. Much later I discovered that the fire happened before I was born, in December 1941.

Yet I do remember being under the Morrison shelter, with the rest of the family later in the war, so it was probably a V1 raid. All the rubble & soot in creation came down the chimney. I can still taste it.

(...)

For most of my childhood I remembered seeing my dad and my granddad building a shed in the back garden. When I mentioned it to my mother she told me I couldn't possibly remember it because the shed was built the year before I was born.

(...)

I remember a butchers shop in the village where I lived when I was a kid. I can remember going there with my grandma to buy meat and sausages. I can remember the blue-ish tiled shop and the elderly shop assistant. It was only years later that my mum told me that yes, there was once a butcher's in the village, but that it changed into a hairdresser's before I was born. I can still see my grandma and I in that shop.

(...)

I distinctly remember as a child playing on my dad's lorry in the desert. He was a driver in the RAF, and was posted in Aden. There is no way this memory can be true as my father returned from Aden ten years before I was born.

(...)

This was years ago. I'm looking outside my parents' kitchen window. They used to live on the 5th floor of an apartment block. It's night and it's dark.

There's a road with very few lights on leading towards a completely dark and unlit crossroads that have roadworks going on. I hear a crash - this terrible noise – and that's all I can remember. When I mentioned this to my mother, it turned out that when I was in her belly she had some guests visiting from abroad and she was hosting a party. Quite late at night they were running out of wine so she asked one of the more sober guests to get on his bike and go out to buy some more. On his way out he didn't see the roadworks and crashed breaking his leg.

(...)

I have had a very vivid false memory of myself as a young child (maybe 4?) playing with my Granddad. He was wearing a mustard-coloured jumper and throwing me up into the air and catching me. Years later I asked my mum about it and she told me my Granddad died just before I was born. I never met him, although he did have a mustard-coloured jumper that he would always wear.

(...)

Attending the wedding of my auntie. This false memory was an intentional plant by my dad as a wind up (I had claimed to remember my auntie's wedding, not realising it had happened before I was born). He embellished it with details about the church, the dress, the weather, etc. based on his memory. I now have a fully formed memory of a wedding I never attended. Canapés were lovely, but the duck was overdone.

(...)

I have a vivid "memory" of a time from before I was even born. The memory is of being in a car with my family (parents and older sister) at an open-concept zoo, with monkeys surprising us by jumping on our car.

My family must have told me about the story when I was really young, and it must have had such an impression on me that I not only vividly imagined it, but also added myself to the story. The visit that this "memory" refers to happened years before I was born.

(...)



I grew up with a vivid memory of being in a theatre with my mother and relatives to see a play starring my father. I remember the chairs, the audience, the scenario and my father's acting. In my memory, I'm about 6 years old. Many years later, during a family get together, I started to talk about the experience - laughing and so on. My parents looked at me in a strange way and said that I wasn't born when this episode happened. Besides, some aspects of my "memory" were incorrect, such as the people present in my recollection were not actually at the real event. So, nowadays I think that I might have heard the story when I was very young and remembered it later.

(...)

When I was younger I always believed my first memory was in my mother's womb. I would tell my mom that I remembered something hitting my head while I was a baby inside her. She would laugh it off.

When I was 12 I had a dream that an apricot my mom swallowed hit me on the head. The next morning I told her about the dream. She said that when she was 7 months pregnant she was hit in the stomach with a ping-pong ball. To me, that was the validation I needed to confirm my memory.

(...)

## **BIRTH**

I remember my parents waking my sister and I up in the middle of the night, wrapping us in blankets and putting us in the back of the car. It was very exciting. They dropped us at a family friend's house. They travelled to the hospital because my mother was in labour with me!

(...)

I remember watching my mother give birth to my baby brother in our house.

(...)

I remember my mum bringing home my baby brother from hospital when I was 18 months old, and me prodding him in his baby basket. It was in the living room and he was placed on the floor, but I was too young to remember this happening.

(...)

I remember remembering coming out of my mother.

(...)

I have a photographic false memory of coming home from hospital when I was few days old. I believe that this memory must have been created after listening to my mother relating the story of me coming home. My photographic memory is that my father was seated next to my mother who was carrying me and he was wearing a cream colour jacket. We were in the back seat of the car. I know it is impossible for me to remember this event and I have battled with this question for so long.

(...)

I was a very small child and I'm standing at the front door of my house watching my mum being driven away in an ambulance, my dad is standing to my left. My mum is being driven away as she is about to give birth to my sister.

This couldn't have happened as my dad would have gone with her, and I would've been with a neighbour or family. And she never went in an ambulance; she was driven to the hospital by my dad.

So, all made up - yet entirely a memory in my head.

(...)

I remember being sat in a small yellow plastic bathtub in a hospital being washed of specks of blood. It was the aftermath of my birth.

(...)

My grandmother vividly remembered her father running out of the house to go announce her birth.

(...)

I was in an apartment. Four women were playing cards. The sky outside the window was dark. The curtains were an orangey plaid. The women were smoking; I remember the bluish smoke curling in tendrils toward the light over the table at which they played. One of the women said, "I think the baby's coming!" and she was rushed to the hospital. Now, the way I know that this memory is false (even though it is as clear today as when I was a child) is that the baby she gave birth to an hour later was me.

(...)

When I was 3 years old, my mother went to the hospital, to give birth to my brother. My father and I stayed at home and we jumped on the bed to celebrate the new baby - it was fun - we were very happy that day. But my father says he went to the hospital with my mother. And my mother agrees with him.

(...)

My 18-year-old son (who was diagnosed with Asperger's at the age of 15) believes that his memories begin from his own birth. He has described to me his 'recollection' of the delivery room and the people present at his birth.

(...)

I remember running away from the hospital as a newborn baby

(...)

I have a memory of when I was born. I clearly remember the cold on my skin, all I could see was a white bright light, I remember the tactile sensation of strong hands on me, and I remember water. I remember I felt extremely curious, and I remember having a non-verbal thought that something very important was happening to me. Nobody believes me, with the exception, of course, of my mother. I will never know if this memory is true or false, it is, this is certain, 'non-believed'.

(...)

## 0-5 YEARS

When I was 5 years old, I thought I could take my older siblings by the arm and throw them in front of me over my shoulder. I thought I had superhuman strength.

(...)

At the age of 2 I was in the kitchen walking around. I remember the black and white tiled floor. I walked to a cupboard. I reached out my hand to feel into the unknown of 'above the cupboard' and placed my palm down. A searing pain erupted through my hand. I stumbled to the sink crying as I went. A large white circle appeared on my hand as I plunged it under the running tap.

(...)

There was a time when I was three years old, and my parents took me to a park to go on the slides and the swings. I wasn't very aware of my surroundings and I was walking in front of the people on the swings, and I got kicked by one of the girls. I got kicked back 30 metres. I fell, and moments after I landed I saw several people looking down on me.

(...)

I remember getting lost, when I was around 2 or 3 years old. I was wearing a bright red duffel coat.

I remember walking around Arnold Circus, in London, smiling at people and being smiled at.

An old man found me, who looked like my grandfather, and returned me to my mother.

In fact, I was never lost. I saw a photograph of myself at 2, wearing red, and the rest just came to me. I'm not sure why.

(...)

When I was about 2 or 3, my family took the ferry to Germany. I remembered having a nice safe trip but when I was about 8 I was told that I was nearly blown off the boat by a gust of wind.

(...)

At age 2 or 3, I was stuck in a slide and cried and cried. I remember it from outside, from a parent's point of view, so I know it's a false memory.

(...)

When I was 5 I remember nearly falling from the car that my mother was driving, because I opened the car door.

(...)

I recall sitting in the train station when I was about 3 years old and finding a cigarette on the floor and picking it up, smelling it and then throwing it at a random person.

When I spoke to family they said it didn't happen - but I think it did.

(...)

I have a memory from when I was a baby. I was being carried around during a family gathering when my father and his mistress came and disturbed the whole dinner.

(...)

I have a memory of when I was a child. I was a toddler in a crib and unable to climb out. I am crying hearing my parents outside in the living room talking to other adults.

I am standing in the crib distressed because I can't get out and the only thing I can see is a sliver of light from the door being slightly cracked open. That is where the memory ends; it is just a scene that I remember. If I was heard by anyone they paid no attention to me.

(...)

I mis-remember one evening riding with my parents in their car in Attalla, Alabama. I think I was around three, so this would have been about 1966. My aunt was there in the back seat with me, and we played some sort of singing game. Why was this a false memory? Because at one point a giant dinosaur, Godzilla-like, rampaged through the streets behind the car.

(...)

When I was three years old I left my home to go to the local playground. The entrance to the park was about 3 or 4 houses further down the road from my home, across the road, and then down a short, tree-lined path, before opening out into a large open park. The park was bounded by fields on two sides, the houses of the estate I grew up in on the third, and a river on the fourth.

As I was walking towards the playground equipment I was stopped by two figures calling my name. One was female, the other male. They both had on brown suits (smart trousers & jacket), white shirts and brown ties. They were wearing sunglasses, even though it was not a bright day.

The male crouched down to speak to me, while the woman kept looking around. The male held his hand out to me and said "[My name], we're [my mother's name]'s cousins, she asked us to take you home".

Something didn't feel right. I had just left my mother, and these two were waiting in the park as I arrived. I ran home to my mother to tell her everything that had happened. She told me that the people I described didn't sound like her cousins.

I've told this story to my family several times since. My mother has no recollection of me ever coming home and telling her anything like this. None of the details quite add up to any time when this could have happened in reality. It is however one of my strongest false memories.

(...)

Born and raised in England.

Born 1970.

White from a working class background.

My memory would have been when I was around 5 years old. The thing is my memory is very good at that time/age and I remember actual events very clearly. Events that have been backed up by others.

But not this one.

I remember a Christmas day when my father invited a couple of black co-workers home to enjoy Christmas dinner as they had recently entered the country alone from Jamaica without their families.

I can still see one gentleman and can see how he was dressed, sat in an armchair, in our living room, drinking a bottle of beer. Smiling and laughing.

He has a beige sweater on and a cloth hat.

The memory has always been there.

At the time of the "memory" my dad's factory did indeed have a couple of Jamaicans start to work there, but they never spent Christmas with us or visited our house.

(...)

When I was about two, I was at church, running around the corridors - the corridors were made of a hard stone, speckled with green. In my memory, I crashed into another girl who was dressed for the church nativity as Mary, in a long blue dress and white scarf. When I crashed into her I fell onto the stone floor and cracked my chin open. When I told this memory to my mum years later, she said I'd actually crashed into a lady called Mary. I think I'd merged things I'd seen, heard and remembered about this all into one.

(...)

I remember unwrapping a toy kitchen outside in the garden for my 2nd birthday with all my friends there, but there are pictures of me unwrapping it inside with my family.

(...)

When I was young, I was in a pushchair, so I must have been around 3 or 4 or 5 years old. My older brother and sister (who would have been around 12



and 13 at the time) were babysitting and we went out for a walk. For some unknown reason we went into the garden of a house that's down my road. We went through the tall wooden gate attached to the side of their house and my brother wanted to steal some stones out of their water fountain. As he dipped his hand into the water the owners of the house saw us and shouted "OI!" through the window and scared the three of us. My brother and sister ran away leaving me in the garden in the pushchair. I cried out to them to come and my sister returned in a hurry and grabbed the handles of my pushchair and we left the garden.

I'm now 21, and a few years ago in a conversation over dinner, neither of them had any idea what I was talking about when I retold this story. They claimed they had never both babysat me because they always used to argue about whose turn it was to look after me, and that they'd never been into the garden of the house down the road. Every time I walk past that house now I always picture the water fountain in the middle of the garden behind the gate. I'd love to peak over the gate to see if that water fountain actually exists!

(...)

I thought I remembered putting a garden fork through my foot when I was about 2 years old. I remember attempting to use the fork to dig but accidentally striking my wellington boot and the point going into my foot. However, I have no scars!

(...)

We had a tiled corridor in our house. One of the tiles was loose and when I was two to five years old, I used to lift this tile and look underneath. I'd see green, endless lands and trees and lovely animals under the tile. Then at a later age (maybe seven) I lifted the tile to see if I could see that land or garden again but it was no longer there. It was very sad...I just smiled at the magic.

(...)

I can vividly remember attending a wedding, aged around 5, where there was a grape juice fountain built out of stone in the corridor. I remember feeling grumpy during the car journey there, seeing my grandparents across the church aisle, being allowed to try the grape juice and climbing trees with other children afterwards. I have always counted this as one of the weddings I had

been to until a couple of years ago (aged about 25) my mum said it had never happened. Who's ever heard of a grape juice fountain anyway?

(...)

I remember being told to go home quickly by our lollipop lady because there was a fire at our house. In fact we did have a fire at my home but it was when I was only 4 years old and pre-school. I also remember starting the fire by lighting matches and throwing them under the bed - so I imagine that my memory is a reconstruction, born of the guilt at starting the fire that destroyed much of our home!

(...)

I remember when I was 5 years old I could not fall asleep in the dark because a huge truck was in my room...

(...)

SOCK CLONES: I have this memory as a child, maybe at age of three or four, of having cloned a pair of socks by stuffing one half of the pair into the other and then pulling out two identical socks thereby turning my pair into three. To me, this is still magic.

(...)

Growing up in rural Austria near the woods I clearly remember a gunshot accidentally fired by a hunter going through my window and leaving a hole only a few feet above my cradle. I asked my mom about it when I was grown up and she said she couldn't remember - but I know she's lying.

(...)

I was around 5/6 and I used to play on my street. At the top was a dead end and an area that was fenced off and filled with trees. I wandered through the trees, through a small maze and discovered an ancient Aztec stone chair. I have the most vivid memory of going through the maze just to sit on this chair. A few years later they built a house over the ground and I believed they had destroyed my secret hideout and the ancient artefact. It's highly unlikely it ever happened but either way it was my secret place, so no one would be able to correct me otherwise. Living in a fantasyland.

(...)

My most vivid and earliest memory I have is when I was around 3 years old. I was sitting on the kitchen counter and my mum was telling me to give up my dummy. I remember feeling so passionate about not being a baby anymore that I threw my dummy across the room in triumph. My mum tells me that this didn't happen at all - she actually had to take the dummy off me, kicking and screaming.

(...)

I am alone, at the pinnacle of Sierra Mountain. I am two years old and wearing OshKosh B'Gosh dungarees, with an embroidered clown's face upon my chest. The sun is setting behind me. I'm wondering "why am I all alone, here in this remote place?" But it is just a photograph. Captured in a photographer's studio for posterity. I discovered that this memory was illusory on my tenth birthday. Now THAT'S a REAL memory...

(...)

I can remember using the restroom when I was a kid, around the age of 5. My older brother was on the counter urinating from 4 feet off the ground. I was in awe. He had a pristine golden stream flowing into our family's white porcelain throne. I too had a decent stream built up. Our fun was interrupted when our mother burst into the room. She fussed at the two of us. This past Christmas when I told my golden story to the family, my mother awkwardly let me know that my memory never actually happened. I, to this day, am devastated.

(...)

When I was four or five I developed a memory of looking out the living-room window and seeing my father pulled out on a stretcher from one of those big, brown UPS trucks. That's it, no further action. I was freaked out by this very scary and eerie image, but I was convinced it was a memory and not a dream. I asked my mother about it several years later and she said it never happened. As some kind of memory, though, it's stayed with me as one of fear and of home.

(...)

When I was, perhaps, 5 or 6 I "remember" playing on a big sand pile on the building site that was the estate we had moved onto (our house was among the first few finished, the rest were still under construction). While pulling arms full of sand toward me, I pitched backward into the concrete foundations of one of the new houses, banging my head. We definitely lived on the building site, we definitely used to play there, but despite it being an incredibly vivid memory, it never happened.

(...)

I don't know if I was dreaming or if my dad dressed as Santa was putting gifts under the tree, but I distinctly remember waking up (I must have been around 3 or 4 years old) and seeing Santa putting gifts under the tree. I quietly turned around and went back to my bed, but to this day I can still picture it as if it were yesterday!

(...)

I remember standing on the little balcony in front of our house (I must have been 5) and seeing a yellow helicopter hover three or four meters high some five meters away from the house - something that is clearly impossible given the presence of trees and power lines just in front of the house.

(...)

I have a clear memory from my pre-talking years, sitting in a tub of water on the kitchen floor, listening to the adults talk, and thinking, "That is something I must learn how to do." My parents tell me that I began to talk later than most children, but that when I began, I spoke well, never going through the babbling stage. My mother, however, says, I was never bathed on the kitchen floor in a tub. Uh-oh. I still have the memory.

(...)

Until age four, I lived with my parents in a small retail shop. I have quite a vivid 'memory' of the shop layout but have always been concerned that I 'remember' it from an adult's eye perspective. It is possible that I had been held in someone's arms but I doubt the details of the cash register and stock items would have been of note-worthy interest to a young child. I am not aware of revisiting that shop in later years although, in my early teens, I often waited

at a bus stop across the road from it - which may have encouraged some form of 'manifestation' to develop over time.

(...)

I have a memory of lying on my parent's bed as a baby and looking up at them. But at the time I could only have been a few months old and all my other childhood memories start from a much later age. This must be a false memory constructed after seeing a photograph taken of me lying on my parents' bed and looking up at the camera, whilst only a few months old.

(...)

I'm bouncing up and down on my parents' bed. The room is small but filled with light. In remembering this, I'm looking directly at my 3 year old self - I'm smiling. I'm wearing a large brown fedora with red and gold feathers stuck in the band. I'm naked, save a hooded, velour zip-up top. I'm listening to Boy George's "Karma Chameleon" at full blast. I zip up the hooded, velour zip-up top and catch my boyhood in the metal notches as the zipper slides upwards. I bleed all over my mother's bed. I scream. My mother comes to see what's wrong. I think she is struggling not to laugh.

(...)

I have had for years a strong memory of my baptism ceremony. I remember crying and I remember wearing a long, white dress. It literally felt like a real memory, with all the details. I told my family about the memory when I was 10-12 years old and they tried to explain to me that couldn't be possible because infants don't have memories. I realised a few years later that they talked about that day several times when I was very young - they showed me pictures and explained to me what happened. I must have heard that information and then constructed a memory of the day.

(...)

I am 70 years old (born 1942) and until the repressed memory moral panic of the 1990s led me to reassess, I assumed the following memory to be correct.

I vividly remembered (this was my "first memory"), being carried by my mother in a red blanket down to an air raid shelter in the garden of our home. I never questioned the authenticity of this memory until decades later when it

became apparent that "childhood memories" could be falsely implanted (particularly in vulnerable people in authoritarian contexts--e.g. police stations, therapeutic encounters etc).

I asked my mother in the 1990s to comment on this memory and she asserted it could never have happened, because we did not have an air raid shelter in the garden and we had no red blankets in the house since she hated the colour (this was however the colour of all blankets at my boarding school!). To this can be added that the Germans last bombed Southampton in 1944 - I would have been no more than two years old so my neurological capacity for long term memory at that time is doubtful at best. No idea of when, how, or why, I constructed that memory. I'll leave that to the psychologists!

(...)

## 6-10 YEARS

There is a park near where I live in Melbourne, Australia. When I was six (almost seven) I went to the park to celebrate a friend's birthday party. I remember there being **three** playgrounds in the park. When I returned to the park at age eighteen, I came across **one** playground in the park and went to search for the others but they were not there. It is possible the playgrounds were removed, but unlikely given that there are a lot of tall trees in the non-playground area of the park and thus little room for other playgrounds. The other two playgrounds probably didn't exist.

(...)

When I was eight, I was wearing an orange inflated jacket that caused me to float to the ceiling like a balloon. I could kick myself down, but I would just float back up again. When I went outside, I began floating upwards and couldn't stop.

This might've been a dream, but I remember it very vividly with imagery, just like normal memories.

(...)

A visit to London in the early eighties resulted in the happy occasion of a visit to the hit West End musical CATS. I regaled everyone at school with this highlight of my trip and my mum bought the soundtrack album. I spent every Sunday next to the record player for weeks on end learning the words to each song and 'rehearsing' for when I was old enough to go back to London to star in it myself. Over the next few years, I would enthusiastically announce when it came up in conversation that I had been to see CATS when visiting London aged around 8, until that is, one day in about 2001 when I realised with complete clarity that I had invented the entire thing. I asked my mum; did we ever go to see CATS when we were in London? No, she replied, we did not.

(...)

I have a very clear recollection of seeing a band called The Equals, who had a hit with 'Baby, Come Back', in a Sheffield nightclub. I can remember travelling there, what the inside of the club looked like, talking to people at the

venue. I know that it's a false memory as they were around in the late 60s and I would have only been about 8 years old.

(...)

I have a fresh false memory from my childhood. When I was 10, I used to remember myself at the age of 6 or 7, watching a B&W movie - a French movie perhaps - on TV.

In that movie a woman wearing a dressing gown was walking inside a house and her inner voice was talking to her. At some point she went to the kitchen and took a jar full of cockroaches - meanwhile we still hear her inner voice talking. She opened the jar, set down on the floor and started to pick the cockroaches with her fingers and put them into her rectum one by one. We don't see the scene clearly, we watch her from the top.

After I re-remembered this memory, I was curious about the movie. I looked for it everywhere, asked many people and found nothing. Even if it was a real movie (someone should've remembered this very odd scene) it was impossible to watch it on the national TV channel in the 1980s in Turkey. So in the end I was convinced that this was a false memory.

(...)

When I was about ten, my mum told me that a neighbour got stuck in a thunderstorm with a friend of his. She said that they took shelter under a tree and that a man saw them from afar. As he approached he realised that they were burnt and that when he touched them, the bodies disintegrated.

(...)

I was between 5 and 7. Every summer we used to visit my granny, a long way away from our home. After lunch at my granny's, if the weather was warm and sunny, we would take a long walk: my mum and dad, myself, my aunt, my uncle, and my cousin. We would go to their place, a long walk of a few miles, across a recently de-commission airfield. We would cross a street, go through a hole in a wire fence, and follow one of many paths, well trampled in very tall grass. Not long after, we would cross a very old railway track, with wooden sleepers and rusty rails. Then we would scramble up a small, steep slope, and walk across the concrete runway.



We would take this walk a few times in summer, over the period of maybe 2 years, and every next time I was anxious to see the track, running from left to right, disappearing from sight. I remember my huge disappointment at my parents who would never follow the track in either direction (did I ever ask?) to see where the rails came from, or where they ended. I remember once that my uncle and dad were arguing about how old the track was, what purpose it served, who put it there. One of them bent, or kneeled, or even crawled, trying to find a date-stamp on the rails, to support his claim. I'm pretty sure they didn't find any date, and even with a date, it would have been inconclusive, as very old rails used to be reused for railway sidings.

But we didn't walk left, along, or right along the track, ever.

A few years later, when I was about 12 I walked there on my own. The area was being built up, with heavy construction, which had changed the landscape, and I found no trace of my old rail track at all. When I brought up this subject with my parents (more than once, they always claimed, perhaps irritated at my obsessing and pleading to confirm what I remembered), they said they never remembered any track, that it wasn't there, and I must have just confused it with another place.

Years later I began collecting old maps and town plans - and I also tried to verify my memories. I studied many city plans, from various years, but found nothing. I pestered people interested in the history of local railways, but got nowhere. Now all other people I walked with are dead. All evidence points to the fact, that what I remember so vividly was, in fact, false. And yet - I still can't believe it's false. Not only because of the details of what I remember, but also because I have some memories of when I was as young as two and three. In fact, the oldest one goes back to when I was about 10 months old. So I'm still hoping to come across a detailed plan, or a historical account, which will confirm that my memory of that railway track is real, not false.

(...)

At around the age of 7 or 8 years old, I distinctly, and vividly, recall seeing a strange man push in the front door of my aunt and uncle's house, across the street from my parent's home, and walk in.

Amazed, I followed him. I tried to tell him to get out, but he just looked back at me, kept walking, and went straight through the house, towards the back-door. I ran after him, but when I got to the garden he was gone. Simply nowhere to be seen.

I ran straight to my grandparent's home, where my family were gathered, to tell them. My parents, aunt, uncle and I, ran back over to the house. There was no sign of disturbance. The doors were locked. I still have no explanation for the 'experience', which is still so vivid 25 years later.

(...)

Somewhere in 1997 when I was 6, I was living in a small apartment with my family on the 4th floor. There was a room next to our balcony and inside the room there was a small isolated window at the left side facing a field and the sky. I remember seeing a green comet in the sky through the window - it was spectacular. About 2 years ago my family and I were chatting about our old home, and I found out that the small isolated window never existed.

(...)

When I was about eight or nine, growing up on a farm I had to hold a ewe steady while my dad pulled out bits of decomposing lamb from her wool. The stink was apparently unbearable and my dad is convinced that this experience put me off being a farmer. I have no recollection of it happening to me - I remember it happening to my brother; even though I remember the story being told at various times as I grew up. At least one of us has got it wrong.

(...)

When I was about 10, I was playing with a friend outside his house. I lost my balance at the top of a steep slope, did a back flip and then regained my balance on a wall at the bottom. I still like to think that this is true, but I know it can't be. Mostly because my friend didn't see it, but also because I've never been able to do backflips. I remember it clear as day though - it was really cool!

(...)

I remember driving a bike over my friend who fell in the yard when we were 6.

(...)

When I was 9, my Mom sent me to the convenience store across the street to buy some goods. On the way back, I was about to cross the street when the owner pulled me back; a white Ford was speeding down the street and would have hit me.

(...)

## **MOTHER**

As a 2/3 year old I ran out of my nursery class at my mother's call. I still recall it clearly but it couldn't have been true because my mother had emigrated some time earlier! Wrong continent!

(...)

When I was younger I thought I was rich. Turned out I lived below the poverty line with a mother on £70 a week. Guess I just have a burning passion for TV dinners.

(...)

At the age of five being tied up by the legs and hands by my mother and being forced to eat up the eggs I had just thrown up – I hated egg yolks in fried eggs. I still don't know if it's true or false.

(...)

I recall being dragged out of a car as a child while my mother had stopped at a petrol station. It didn't happen, but I did have a real fear of being kidnapped when I was young.

(...)

When I had my wisdom teeth pulled, the interaction between my mother and I before the operation was vivid and real. However, she claims that I was not able to see her after being given the anaesthesia.

(...)

I had a dream that my mum and I got stuck in an elevator with other people and people were trying to help us and lift us out of it. I always thought it was real but my mum told me it was just a dream.

(...)

I 'remember' very clearly that my mother wanted to call me 'Hayley' but that would mean my name would be Hayley Bailey so it was rejected. On telling

this story to my mother she said that it wasn't true, but that as a six year old I met a girl called Hayley on holiday. I loved the name so much I wanted to change mine.

(...)

I remember very vividly, as a child, swiping my finger on a matchbox and my finger setting fire. I held it in front of my face and stared at the flame on the end of my finger. My mum rushed over and put my finger in water to put out the flame.

To this day she denies this happened and it also seems quite physically impossible. Strange.

(...)

My mother dating someone.

(...)

I thought my Barbie doll had come to life. I thought it was real until the age of 7. I told my mum, she told me it was impossible. 'Anabel' AKA Barbie 'spoke' to me.

Evidently, this isn't true.

(...)

As a child I was convinced that it was my idea for my mum to have another baby. I think I must have mixed this up with her telling me that she was pregnant.

(...)

I am 54 years old and just learned from my 75-year-old mother the story about how she married the man who became my biological father. We rarely spoke about him because he deserted my mother and his three very young children. Mom said she met him when he was visiting Kannapolis and attended her high school choir performance. Without telling her parents the plan, she set out with him after he'd offered to drive her to Duke University to find her boyfriend who she missed deeply. They arrived, but couldn't find him after two days of searching. My biological father needed to be in Virginia the next

day. With no time to get my mother back home, she decided to go with him and return home later in the week. Over the next few days, it was decided they should get married, because he had taken a minor over the state line, which she claims was illegal then.

They married. He took her home for introductions, and I can imagine a good talking to! Three children later, many infidelities later, he left. Recently, she told me I would never know the whole truth. As an adult, I've lived a good life without him as a father, so I am cool with my mother's need to reserve her story in secrecy. Since I am working on autobiographical memory in my graduate studies, I cannot help but wonder about the truth of her story. Is it entirely false because she is so lonely and reminiscing a lot since she was widowed from her second husband? Or is it something she has said to get attention in her ailing state of existence? What are false memories anyhow? What is the truth behind the packets of information we recall? How do they serve personal and collective memory? So many questions!

(...)

I lived with my maternal grandparents as a child, and vividly remember a white teapot full of sweets that my grandfather kept in an old wooden cabinet. He would give me a sweet from this teapot whenever I had to take medication. I told my mother about this memory not long ago, to which she exclaimed 'that never happen to you - that happened to me!'

(...)

My mother once told me a story, of how she had set off fireworks in the house as a child, had climbed a tree to escape the blame, and had been hosed down by her father. I thought it was a hilarious story, and told it to my friends. However, a few years later, I asked my mother's brother about it, and he told me it had never happened. I asked my mother and she said the story had never happened, and that she had never recounted it to me.

(...)

Before I was four. My mother cutting my finger and all that came out was yellow bile.

(...)

My much loved middle child 'fell out' with me one day several years ago. The incident, which provoked the fall-out, was something fairly simple which we should have been able to resolve. However, since then, the situation has worsened and worsened to the point where I have not seen or heard from her for about 4 years and have had no contact with my grandchildren for nearly 9 years.

She now believes, with all her heart, that I treated her badly while she was a child - not physically but emotionally and psychologically. Her siblings refuse to side with her about this and the whole family is now split because of it.

I have tried my very hardest since the event to explain, demonstrate, that the things she believes are completely wrong but she will have none of it. Family members and friends, who were around during her growing up, all bear witness to my having been a very good mother to my children and are aghast at her behaviour.

(...)

My mother left our father when I was around six. For years I remembered our mother walking away, pushing my sister in her buggy and holding my brother's hand. I watched this scenario from the second floor window, crying my eyes out, screaming after my mother, wondering why I was the one who was left behind. My grandparents arrived the same day to take me away. This was so painful a memory, that I couldn't even talk about it without crying, and, for me, it was the absolute truth.

It did not bother me at all, that I also had another memory of our father taking us to the sofa in his childhood home, telling us, that mother has left us. If I ever thought about it, I came to the conclusion that mother had left twice, and my memory of her walking away was the "real" leaving, the one where she did not come back. But about ten years ago, when my grandma was still alive, I talked with her and my beloved godmother (grandma's sister, long may she live) about how my birth family had broken up, and what really had happened. (I spoke with these women separately, so they could not influence each other in what was told.)

After these discussions, I had to come to the painful conclusion, that my memory of mother leaving me in the window was false, and father telling me

about the family break-up was probably true. (I can't ask my brother nor my sister, both were too young to remember those times.) It is quite probable that I must have seen mother leave home to do shopping or something with my younger siblings - my poor head had then taken one of those times and put it together with the painful experience of losing my parents and siblings and starting a new life with my grandparents.

(...)

In 1992, I'd gone back home to visit my family because my father was in hospital. During that weekend, my mother told me that I was originally going to be called Patrick Robert, but that in the end they chose to name me after my dad, Junior suffix and all.

In 2010, I started to write a novel and named the main character Patrick Robert. Shortly after I began writing, I explained to my mother that I'd named the main character Patrick Robert (like she and my father had originally planned), because it was based on my experiences growing up. There was a pause and she replied hesitantly, "No, we were ALWAYS going to name you after your father." I'm still unnerved by this.

(...)

A few years ago, I found out my mother had a child when she was about 19 or 20, which she had given up for adoption. I found out as she was trying to trace him, some 60 years later.

She hadn't told my brother and I (we probably would have remembered that), although she had told my sister. She said, and genuinely believed, that she had told us "years ago", and was very upset that it had come as a surprise to us. There was no intent to deceive, and it seems she somehow created the memory of having told us.

(...)

We have lived in our house for 33 years. I can remember our very young son coming into our bedroom during the night - he would climb into bed with me and then I would put him back into his own bed. This happened many times during the night. The odd thing is that I picture our current bedroom when I look back and remember his night-time visits - which makes the memory



false. Why? Our current bedroom was built as part of an extension in 1987 and my son was 12 years old then and he was certainly in his own bed at that age!

It must have been in our previous house but my memory says that it was in our current bedroom. Bizarrely when I told my now 38-year-old son about this false memory, he also remembered it being in our current room, even though it's impossible!

(...)

My mother told me that her maternal grandfather was still alive for the first few years of my life. She had taken me to see him. He lived in a grand house with a zoo. She kept me quiet because "children were to be seen and not heard."

Later, after my mother's death, I did some digging into the family tree and found that my great-grandfather died two years before I was born. The facts seem to support a slippage of the generations - the little girl was actually my mother herself and the old man was her maternal grandfather's father.

(...)

Even now at 48 I still have this amazing memory of my mother running away with me in her arms - at the age of 6 months old. She was running from a cyclonic wave crash. I was wrapped in a faded and old white cloth. She was trying to hold on to me as she ran, whilst simultaneously shielding me from the strong winds that blew. I actually felt her running and the strong winds hitting my face.

(...)

I remember my mother explaining to me that she trained as a nurse after studying philosophy.

(...)

The wavy and long, dark brown hair that fell down as my mother bent down to hand me my toothbrush. My mother never had curly hair, and it was never long.

(...)

How about a false NON-memory? I was born in 1943, and in my middle age my mother told me that when I was a very small boy, I had witnessed the mid-air explosion of an aircraft, and that she'd successfully erased my memory of the event in case I'd find it too distressing. Well, whether she was right or wrong to do it (I think wrong), I certainly have no memory of either the event or the brainwashing.

(...)

As a child I owned a splendid, blue, large buttoned coat with sumptuous yellow lining and neat pointed collars. I have vivid memories of wearing it - it was for special occasions and Sunday best. I have recently started to make clothes for my daughter and recalled the joy of wearing the coat in a conversation with my mother. She informed me that the coat I described was our neighbour's daughter's coat and that I had a brown duffle coat, with toggles on the front. I would have staked my life on it, that the blue coat was mine.

(...)

According to mum, I hated going to see my father at the weekends. According to me, those weekends were the best thing in life ever - providing a place where I was left at peace, addressed like an equal. I'm not sure whose false memory this was, though I love to think it's hers.

(...)

Daughter "recalled" history of abuse from family after use of tobacco, alcohol & cannabis+ at age 14 (and after being annoyed with dating restriction with 18 y/o college student). Social services investigation, but no credible evidence to support. Is dyslexic; some perceptual issues in general noted by mom (RN, MS) from age 3 or so. Adopted at 6 weeks old but no reported significant biological maternal/paternal history. As a creative child many "stories" told as true that were not actual (she had cancer, etc.)

(...)

My mum passes a raw garlic clove from her mouth into mine, in the kitchen.

(...)

## **FATHER**

From the age of around 11 I have told people that my dad was in a band called the “Buzz” and appeared on top of the pops. He played guitar.

Whilst I had a date over for dinner at my parents’ house I recounted this story. Mum and dad both adamantly said the event and conversation with me never happened... completely fabricated.

(...)

I have a memory of playing on a pushbike, learning to ride, saying ‘push daddy.’ But I realised this isn’t a real memory – it came from a home movie of the event that has been converted into a memory.

(...)

My father was a first responder to the 9/11 attacks on the twin towers in New York. I was in second grade and I distinctly remember when my dad came home, I ran up to him and gave him a hug and he was covered in dust and rubble. However, years later he told me he had just showered and changed, so he was completely clean.

(...)

When I was 1 year old, my dad left... I remember this from two points of view. One was sat on the stairs watching him leave, the other I was behind a sofa. They can’t both be true, so one is false – or they both are as I was too young to remember the event.

(...)

I was walking to school one day when I was very little with my dad, when two men leapt out of a car and dragged me down the street. Dad chased them down.

(...)

When I was little, I was at a hockey game with my father and I got lost for a long time and was found by a police officer. He told me that another officer had found my father in the parking lot, looking for me.

My father did lose me, but only for a minute and he never made it as far as the parking lot...

(...)

Against my will, my dad forced me to hold my one-year-old sister on my lap on the motorway for three hours - I was terrified because he was speeding. Months later I had a dream that the car crashed and my sister died in my arms. When I woke up I felt guilty for a long time and had to make sure my sister was okay when I next saw her at my dad's. For a small period of time I thought the dream was real.

(...)

I used to have a vague memory of my father standing in a particular corner of the kitchen smoking. I used to think it was a dream, but a few years ago I found out he did indeed used to smoke.

(...)

My father died when I was fourteen years old. For years I had described my father as having blue eyes.

One day I looked at his passport colour photo picture and his eyes were brown. To be sure, I looked for another document and it clearly stated he had brown eyes. Anyway, sometimes I remember his face and I have to make an effort to change the colour of his eyes.

(...)

Growing up, my father was always a rather grumpy person, with a steely personality. I often felt he didn't want to spend time with me and that I was a nuisance to him. Looking back, my father was plagued by his own childhood experiences, trying so hard to overcome his rejections. I love my father.

(...)

I believed for many years that Father Christmas existed. I later found out it was just my dad wearing my red hat and his jacket inside out (it had a red lining).

(...)

I convinced myself that my dad had been murdered. This was just after dad moved out, which of course gave me a deeper impression that he was no longer alive.

(...)

Sometimes when my Dad got really angry at the actions of another driver, he would follow them even if we were all in the car. On one occasion, he got annoyed at the driver in front, so he followed him to a car park. When the man in the other car got out, he only had one arm. My dad had a go at him anyway. When I retold this story to my family, my dad denied that it had ever happened.

(...)

I was nine years old. I awoke one night with my stepfather's mouth on my nipple. He smiled and whispered, "Sssssh." I yelled for my mother. He skittered toward the kitchen. She came in to kneel next to my bed and gently dispelled everything I told to her. He came into my bedroom and asked what was wrong. They went to bed after telling me I'd had a dream. It was never spoken about again. Ever.

(...)

I was convinced that when I was living in Rome as a child I saw Michelangelo's *David*. I went to study art history as an undergraduate for four years, carrying the pleasant memory of having experienced a Michelangelo in all its glory, sublimity and sculptural grandeur. A few years ago I found out that the V&A London had a replica of the sculpture. When I went to see it, I was surprised to see how anorexic it looked compared to my memory. The one I thought I saw was much grander – perhaps it was because I remember looking at it from a child's point of view when I was fascinated by its strength, immaculate stone quality and dominating presence. I called my dad and told him of my disappointment and... to my dismay (that I feel till today) I found out that we never went to Florence and that I never saw Michelangelo's *David*.

How do I remember such features and why do I get the feeling that Proust got when he smells a madeleine and searches for the source of the memory deep within?

There was no YouTube. Maybe I watched on TV and was fascinated then. Maybe we do transport 'memetic genes' (Dawkins) which carry experiences and feelings intragenerationally. What I know is that it feels real to me...

(...)

I was just 9 3/4 years old (at that age the fractions count), my father took me to my first ever symphony concert. It was held at the Melbourne Town Hall. The soloist was the English pianist, Solomon. I have a clear visual recollection of a short, bald-headed man sitting at a very grand piano, in front of the (then) Victorian Symphony Orchestra. I can hear in my memory, with crystal clarity, the very distinctive opening theme of Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto. Dum, dum, dum, da dum daa dum, da dum, da dum.

My memory of that night is especially precious as it was the only concert I went to with my father (who had been a professional pianist). He died very suddenly the following year. Fifty years later, I mentioned my memory to a representative of the (now) Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. I asked if they still had a copy of the programme for that June 1954 concert. The good news was that they did. The bad news (confirmed from a biography of Solomon I obtained a little while later, which listed all his concerts) was that he indeed did play a Beethoven piano concerto that night, but it was the FIFTH, not the third. I still warmly cherish that (imperfect) memory.

(...)

My stepdaughter at the age of 42 accused her father of raping her from the age of 7 to 14 resulting in an abortion conducted apparently by her father, a doctor, and his nurse. She had no memory of these events until she went to a Hastings based hypnotherapist and memories of these and other sexual abuse by other men came out over time during hypnosis. None of the events she recalled happened and the description of the abortion is impossible medically. The hypnotherapist was poorly trained having attended a home study course over weeks rather than years, plus a weekend hands-on session. My stepdaughter has since emigrated to Australia and will not discuss the accusations

with her father, although her strongly held new beliefs made her go to the police to have him arrested. She first made her accusations in May 2010.

(...)

I can still "remember" that when I was really little, Dad cast a spell that meant I could only bark instead of speaking...and I freaked out because I couldn't tell him to undo the spell. I told Mum about it once and she said he and I used to play a game where we pretended that's what happened.

(...)

I'm a young boy, 8 or 9 - tall for my age, skinny and awkward too. Like many boys that age I'm also bold, noisy and perpetually distracted. It's an icy November night and I'm being taken along with my younger brother via a small boat equipped with a 30 hp engine up an unforgiving river to boarding school. It's a Mission school for aboriginal kids mostly and it's run by priests, nuns and brothers who have little time for boys like me or my brother.

Bundled in winter-wear over our pyjamas, we've made this trip each Sunday since the beginning of September and I dread it more each week. Complaints just draw my father's ire so I'm silent; he's not to be trifled with. After a weekend with us at home my father can hardly wait to be rid of us it seems. On the river it's darker than I can ever remember night being and it's just above freezing.

We are far from any city, far from ambient light and far from anything resembling my expectations for family Sundays. My mother is in the boat with us. She's silent as my brother hugs himself as close to her as is possible. It's the kind of thing that generally draws a sneer from my father or the taunt, "Mama's boy!" Not tonight though, the only sound so far is the 30 hp engine put-putting slowly up the river.

Trying not to think about the week ahead or my dread, I look up at the night sky above my mother and I'm surprised by what I see. I gasp, "Holy hell, look at the stars!"

"God's country." My dad says with certainty and a half smile, "You'll never see a sky like that anywhere else."

We are north of the 60th parallel - I think but don't say, "who would want to?" My brother lets go of mom long enough to exclaim, "It's beautiful!" Dad slows the boat down and we all stare upwards trying to take it all in. I remember the feeling of awe as if seeing stars for the first time. My father, a pilot, is in his element here and starts by pointing out the two Dippers and then the Great Bear and Little Bear constellations (Ursa Major and Minor he informs us), and then everything else he knows about the night sky as we inch up the river.

The names are exotic and I'm happy to be distracted by them. Proud my dad knows them; Cassiopeia, Cepheus, Draco, Lynx, Perseus and the North star Polaris. There are more names but it's hard to take it all in. And while it's grand I also feel scared but don't know why.

The boat's motor, which has been running slowly while we gazed, stops.

All eyes on dad now as he yanks the chord trying to restart the motor. Four, five times... nothing but sputtering and then dying. We're beginning to drift now and dad hands me an oar and we start paddling towards the left shoreline.

Mom remains quiet and my brother wants to know if this means we can skip school this week - he's tired of that school. Tired of not being liked. My father is annoyed, if his expression means anything, but he's paddling hard and there's sweat on his forehead. I know this is serious now and I paddle for all I'm worth doing everything exactly as my dad tells me to do it.

As the shoreline gets closer I can see my father begin to relax. He puts the oar down and tries a pull on the engine and this time it starts up with its familiar put-put. My dad's relief is not shared by my brother who says in a tearful voice "I don't wanna go to the Mission, I wanna sleep at home!"

My father considers him for a moment and says, "Is it okay if we go pick up all your stuff at school and bring it home first?" My brother nods his head yes, not sure if dad is just playing with him. We hug the shoreline slowly all the way to the Mission and then back again.

The trip both ways is long and cold but there are no complaints. My father fills the air with his laugh and stories of navigating by the stars, and bush pilots who did the near impossible just by surviving. I'm hanging on every



word as if he might test me on it later. Asking questions, hoping they're smart ones, and that he'll like me.

Back home a fire is started in the wood stove and as soon as our hands and ears are warmed up and are no longer stinging we are packed off to bed. I remember the warm yellow light streaming in from the living room and the warmth of that bed while me and my brother made plans for being home every day. I remember my dad coming in when he thought we were sleeping and kissing us goodnight.

(...)

I have a very vivid memory, one of my favourites as a child, of being driven along in the back seat of my Dad's car. I could see his head over the top of the seat, and we were going quite fast along winding country roads. He turned his head and told me I had to look after the car for a minute, as he had to pop out. He then proceeded to open the door, and his head disappeared as the door closed. I can clearly see him in my mind rolling along the grass verge and disappearing behind me as the car sped on. I sat, panicking, for what felt like minutes, until the door opened and he jumped back in - I can't remember how he managed that part though.

(...)

Aged about two, I distinctly remember my dad sawing down the bannister rails on our landing, sitting me on his shoulders and us both jumping down to the hallway below. Obviously this didn't happen - for one thing the rails are all very much intact - but it's a "memory" I've carried all my life.

(...)

When my parents had just divorced, me, my sister and my mother visited my dad's place. He refused to open the door and had locked himself in the garage. My mother sat us in the car and broke the garage door open to find my dad trying to commit suicide with the exhaust. I never spoke about it to anybody. I've had therapy for it as it traumatised me. When my therapist wanted to bring my dad in to talk about he said it never happened. Later my mom and sister told me that I had imagined it as well.

(...)

As a child, I moved a lot. My dad was in the RAF and we often lived in remote parts of the UK. Over the years, I developed archetypal images of what constituted a beach, the sea, a river and forests and for most of my adult life, I believed these images were an amalgamation of my childhood travels, that they did not relate to one specific place but were a culmination of my experiences of these types of landscape - a false memory of them.

Imagine my surprise when 30 or so years later, I revisited one of my early 'homes' close to Findhorn Bay in the north east of Scotland and found that the images in my mind were exactly what was in front of me - not archetypes at all, but real and identifiable places which I recognised. Is this false memory in reverse?

(...)

I remember so clearly taking a medal that belonged to my father and burying it in the garden. I then looked for it for ages, digging up little pieces of earth, but I never found it. When I think of it now it must be a false memory. Why would my father have medals? Why would I bury them? But the memory feels like truth - shiny colours and crisp edges.

(...)

My dad tells me he has a memory of looking up out of his pram as a baby, at the sky above. He was moving very quickly and the pram was jumping down a hill because his mother, my nana, had accidentally let go of the pram. He says this was his first memory. The event happened but I don't believe it was his memory, but a past event he let become a memory.

(...)

I had a strong memory of being a young boy in a car driving along a country road in Suffolk. Rounding a corner near home, we swerved narrowly avoiding a milk float. The milk float also swerved and ended up on its side, shedding its load and covering the road in milk. I can still picture the road, a large oak tree and the milk sloshing about despite the fact that the child in the car was my father. I have never lived in Suffolk.

(...)

## SISTER

At Christmas a group of friends and I convinced my sister that we performed a Christmas ritual of catching a pig at midnight from a local farm. We managed to make her believe that she was there for the ritual the previous year and that she had simply forgotten. She believed us and a false memory was created.

(...)

My younger sister was convinced that one night I dragged her down the stairs by her foot. This is not true.

(...)

I have this memory of when I was a little kid and my sister and I were messing around on our jungle gym. I remember falling off and my sister fell on top of me, scraping up my face, arm, and knee. I remember blood rushing down my face and crying out for my mom. My mother cleaned me up and the next day she walked me into school. I was so embarrassed because I had a huge scabby cut going from my forehead to my cheek and I didn't want the kids to make fun of me. I must have been five years old or younger. In later years I asked my mother about the memory and she has no recollection of any of it.

(...)

I remember when I was younger my mother caught me talking to someone while playing alone. She asked me, "Who are you talking to?" and I replied "my sister." My sister was stillborn two years before I was born.

(...)

I have always had a strong memory of hitting my much older sister over the head with a saucepan when I was 3. While I did hit her, other family members have told me that it was not on the head but on the knee, but hitting her over the head is a powerful part of the memory! I remember standing over her (she was sitting) and bringing it down with a huge thump.

(...)

I lived in London in 1961 with my sister. I was 21, she was 25. We returned to Australia after a year and occasionally reminisced about "the corner shop across the road". Thirty years later my sister visited London. And found that the shop was actually a block away, on the equivalent corner. I was unconvinced, but visited myself 50 years after our first visit to find it was true. The shop was a block away, it was not "across the road". It could not even be seen from the house we lived in.

(...)

I believe that when I was about 5, I left the School grounds to cross the road to go home in the car. I cut it a bit fine and nearly got run over, fell and got grazes on my legs. My sister, who is 2 years older, believes it was her.

(...)

I remember strongly when someone attempted to burgle our house, my sister and I were ready to leave for the door, but I turned away towards the hall to let her go first. She remembers it in a crystal-clear memory too, yet she believes I ran into the bathroom and screamed. There's no way to know what really happened.

(...)

I remember my sister pushing me into a pool as a baby... it's weird because my sister died when I was 2 years old...can it be true? My memories?

(...)

I remember the best winter's day ever when I was 4. The lake on my dad's farm froze over, so we went skating and then came home for hot chocolate. I remember it being the best day ever. I talked to my sister about this day a few years ago and it turns out she got rushed off to A&E with a broken wrist. I only remembered the good stuff.

(...)

As a young boy, I was convinced of the reality of my older sister. I had a complex relationship with a female character in my mind. In my mind, we spent lots of time together and were extremely close, but she was much older than me; in her late teens, maybe twenty - in reality, not much younger than

my mother was when she had me. I was convinced that for some reason she was no longer living with, or in contact with us. So much so, that I asked my mother about my 'sister' to which she replied that no such person existed. On asking my mother about this a few years ago - she has no recollection of the incident, or my inquiries regarding the young woman that seemed so vividly real to me as a child...

(...)

My younger sister was ill when she was born. She was in the hospital for 6 months while I was left at home alone or with various people who weren't my parents. But it was only 2 weeks. And I was never alone.

(...)

I remember my sister standing in the sandbox in the back garden, looking up into the sky and saying she was going to take a knife and fork onto the plane when we went to Rome so she could see what clouds tasted like. She was wearing needle cord dungarees and a blue and grey turtle neck jumper. She actually said it to my parents, and I was only two so I doubt I remember it. I've just heard about it so often. The picture of it is clearer in my mind than memories I know are real.

(...)

My sister and I were wearing long pink nightgowns and we were carried, whilst sleeping, from our beds, down the garden path and into the beds of some neighbours. This was to keep us safe, from what I don't know. My sister has no recollection of this happening.

(...)

My mother was accused of trying to have an abortion, when pregnant with me. Until very recently, I believed this situation related to my younger sister. The story seems to have changed since my Father's death. My younger sister was his favourite...

(...)

I remember, as a little girl, being in the supermarket with my little sister, totally unsupervised. We were filling a trolley with all kinds of stuff from the

shelves, in fits of giggles all the time, knowing we were being extremely naughty. Then we went to the checkout with our trolley and said, still laughing so hard it hurt, "We haven't got any money!" We were then taken into the manager's office and told off. My mother says this never happened and, if it had, would have been very out of character for me.

(...)

My memories of the layout of the house where I grew up were a mirror image of reality. I thought the drive was on the left when it was really on the right; I thought the coal-shed was on the right when it was really on the left, etc. Having argued with my sister about this, I was only convinced when I re-visited the house with her - to establish that she had been right all along. I am in my 60's but fit and well and (hopefully) not about to enter into dotage.

(...)

When I was about 7 years old my twin sister and I were playing in the street and my sister ran into the road and was hit by a car. Cars were much fewer then (1957). In my teens I discovered that this event never happened to my sister, or any other child in the neighbourhood.

I continue to have vivid memories and flashbacks of this event - these are random and are not triggered by anything. I am now 63 and my twin sister died 15 years ago - not in a road accident.

(...)

I remember being in my kitchen as a child and opening a big green peeling wooden back door (with a big bolt at the top) because my little sister asked me to, as she couldn't reach. But we never had a door like that. Strange.

(...)

One of my younger sisters claimed that she saw my mother sexually abuse me several times when we were children. She had very clear memories of my mother cornering me in various rooms and masturbating me. My sister would have been between 5-8 at the time of the alleged assaults while I would have been 10-13. This abuse never happened. My mother was dead at the time of the accusations. My sister was 36 at the time she made these claims. They caused tremendous hurt and upset in the family. My sister and I have never

reconciled. She is estranged from most of the family and I don't know if she continues to claim she is telling the truth or not. I've always felt she was emotionally disturbed even as a child. But she is very intelligent, attractive and has married well and happily.

(...)

## **BROTHER**

I remember going on a woodland walk with my older brothers when we were young. It was terrifying because they told me horror stories of children who would be snatched up by trees when their guardians weren't looking. It was a bright day, but the canopy was so thick that it could have almost been night. When my dress got snagged on a branch I fell into such a fit of panic that they had to turn back and take me home – served them right, didn't it!

(...)

My younger brother was born when I was 4 years old. I distinctly remember my brother being left on the red kitchen floor next to the disused gas pipe crying and crying and crying. He just wouldn't stop and my mum just left him there. I felt desperately sad and wanted to comfort him and make him stop. My mum said when I asked her a while ago that my brother was never left on the floor.

(...)

I remember calling my brother 'Rory' when I was young (around 4 years of age) when in fact his name was Mani.

(...)

My false memory is from when I was younger and my brother and I were sharing a bath. My mum picked me up out of the bath and a tiny little poo floated where I had been sat.

(...)

Biting my brother's back and pulling off a huge chunk of skin...

(...)

I remember when my older brother cut his chest open on a very sharp, metal shutter lock in our playroom in Edinburgh. I wasn't in the room I don't think, but I walked in just after it happened to see the blood. The blood looked like whole eggs, but an orangey-red colour. I recall telling everyone for years that 'eggs' of blood were coming out of his chest. It was a huge cut and he still



has the scar on his chest, but it's the description of the blood, so vivid but so false – it must be! (I think I was about 5 and my brother was about 7.)

(...)

This is an odd one because it's a shared false memory, though, as you will see, I'm not sure whose. Logically it probably didn't happen at all. My brother and I both have vivid and almost identical recollections of an incident in our childhood. I'm not sure when exactly it took place, but we had been to a local travelling fair and won a goldfish in a plastic bag. Back at home it was carefully transferred to a bowl. A few days later, as fairground goldfish often do, we found it floating on the surface. We were both very upset and our mother took a straw and blew into its mouth, reviving the apparently deceased fish. We have held this shared story, and told it many times, for years and years.

My mother passed away in 1999. Then a couple of years ago her sister, our aunt passed away and we attended the funeral. In the vicar's eulogy she told exactly that same story about our aunt, having had it recounted to her by one of our cousins. It seems that they, three brothers (who were present at the funeral - possibly a fourth who wasn't) recollect it just as clearly, but with their mother in the role of goldfish saviour.

The story seems unlikely to begin with but it's monumentally unlikely that both mothers had the same miraculous success with the same trick in the same circumstances. At least two of us, possibly all of us must have a false memory.

(...)

I was 5 years old at the top of the stairs with my older brother. My brother (who was always teasing me) was holding my little blue toy buggy over the top step and threatening to drop it down the staircase. His arm jolted forward and thinking he had followed through with his threat I jumped after my beloved toy - falling right to the bottom and ending up in hospital with a suspected broken nose.

I have retold this story many times over the years, but it was only when reminiscing with my parents and brother well over a decade later that I discovered I had actually been playing on my own that day. I had simply tried to walk my buggy down the stairs and tripped over it. My brother wasn't even home.

(...)

When I was 1 or 2, I was convinced that my brother was actually my neighbour.

(...)

I remember sharing a bunk bed with my younger brother as a child and I always had the top bunk. One night I felt a cold slimy three-fingered hand touch my foot and ankle. After panicking I looked underneath my bunk and saw nothing there.

(...)

When I was a child, around 5 or 6 years old, I remember vividly being in my parent's car with them and my brother. We were coming from my grandmother's house when they stopped the car to buy some vegetables leaving my brother and I in the car. I remember that out of the blue the car started the engine and started moving. My brother and I tried to stop it, but it was like it had gained a life of its own and we could not control it. We were crying hysterically and trying to move the wheel but nothing happened, it just kept moving. Finally the car moved back to the place where it was, by itself.

Both of us were crying and shaking when my parents arrived and believed none of what we said. We never spoke about it again. After maybe 10 years I was asking my brother if it had actually happened, and my brother remembered the same thing - he even told part of the story I already knew. Of course, deep inside, I still think it didn't happen, because it is simply surreal. Maybe we invented this story together and the idea was so strong that it got recorded in our brains as if it had actually happened. Of course I do not dare to ask my parents, as they would think I was insane.

(...)

I was 3 years old, just. My parents asked me to give my new baby brother a kiss goodnight. My mother lent him forward for me to plant him a kiss, to which he vomited into my mouth...actually inside my mouth. Not sure if it actually happened.

(...)

When I was 3, my brother pushed me off a wall and split my head open. He maintains that I fell of my own accord. One of us is wrong - but who? (he was a nice bro most of the time!)

Also, he is convinced that we stopped over in Bahrain on our way back from Korea when we were kids. I have no recollection of this and nobody else in the family seems to have heard it before.

(...)

## **OTHER FAMILY**

I recall as a child going on a fishing trip with two of my cousins and an uncle. I remember my cousins laughing as they ate some of the maggots they were using for bait and I have a recollection of a fishhook being caught in my cheek. My mother denies it.

(...)

We went to my grandparents' house in Manchester for Christmas. My great uncle was there and he had broken both his big toes. It was very hard for him to go up and down the stairs. I remember him holding onto the bannister and making jokes about it. But we never spent Christmas there and he never broke his toes. I don't know where this memory came from.

(...)

I remember talking to people through a vent in my grandparent's house, but not certain if it actually happened. The vent was upstairs looking down. It was during the Christmas holiday.

(...)

My grandpa had early dementia and he is convinced he has been to South America. Not only this, he believes he has trekked across the Amazon and has seen piranha fish.

(...)

I remember being in my ill grandfather's house and my uncle helping him go to the bathroom. After a while my uncle went to check on him - he opened the door and my granddad was sitting dead on the toilet. I know this is false because he died in his sleep and I wasn't there.

(...)

Every time I smell cigar smoke, I am reminded of my maternal grandfather, who died when I was 1 ½ years old. I felt so pleased to have this memory of sitting on my grandfather's lap as a baby and smelling his cigar smoke. I

talked to my mom about it once, and she told me my grandfather never smoked.

(...)

When I was a young kid, my maid took me to a computer games store. When I was in there playing games, she briefly left to use a public toilet on the opposite street. At the same time, an uncle who I had not met before came and asked me to go to somewhere with him. I agreed to go and my maid flew into a panic when she found I was lost. He returned me back home safely and yet, when I asked my parents if this strange thing had really happened, they said no.

(...)

Setting my nana's hair on fire.

(...)

As a child I went to Cyprus to meet my auntie and uncle who lived there. I remember most of the flight. I remembered that we flew over a beach and my auntie was next to me and said "don't make sandcastles there, there are endangered turtles." Turns out my aunt was not on the flight.

(...)

I was young, maybe four, and locked myself in the bathroom and got stuck. According to my auntie, I was passed the key under the door and the ordeal was over. The way I remember it; the fireman had to get me through the second story window using a cherry picker.

(...)

This is one of the terrifying memories of my childhood. I was in my grandparents' house and saw a tiny premature-looking baby being dangled upside down in front of me right after it was born. It was extremely tiny, no bigger than the current size of my hand. The baby's body and face was a blue-ish grey colour and very scary looking.

(...)

I have a memory of my grandmother threatening to throw me down the stairs when I was 2-3 years old. I remember every detail, the red carpet on the floor, the glass in the window of the front door, the black rail. I remember clearly grabbing her black and white furry coat in agony.

But the truth is that this never happened. The red carpet was in our living room but not in the staircase. It is impossible to see the front door from the staircase, the black rail was in our later home, and she did not buy that black and white coat until many years later. Besides she was not a psychopath, let alone a baby murderer.

(...)

I have a memory of my great grandmother coming to visit when I was around 5 years old. When she left 2 men came to our house to ask questions about my grandmother. She was a known communist and these men were with the FBI. I have no idea if any of this is true but I have images in my head of the experience.

(...)

My Gran often made lovely clothes for the family when I was little. When I was about 5 she made me a beautiful tartan pinafore dress. It was put onto me to measure the length. Gran neatly folded the skirt up into the waistband to show my mother how much to turn it up, and it was instantly the correct length.

No taking it off, measuring, pressing, sewing, trying it on again - it was perfect right away. Impossible, but that's how I remember it!

(...)

I remember as a child sneaking around the back of my grandfather's armchair and opening a small door that led to a room upstairs. I know for certain this can't be true but the memory is so strong, so vivid that it is as if I had done it earlier on today.

(...)

I am three. I'm sat underneath a captain's bed in a pile of Doc Martens. I'm looking up at my Auntie Caroline who is frozen still, and is actually just a

"life-size" photograph of herself. I run into the next room and around the bed while my mum phones an ambulance for her dying sister. When I go back in to see my Auntie Caroline she begins to fade into the photograph of herself and disappear.

(...)

I remember copying my cousin's gestures who had just been stung by a bee, but seeing it through my aunt's eyes.

(...)

Being in a pram and my uncle jokingly letting go of it so that I rolled down a hill. He ran after the pram and I remember his face as I looked up at the sky passing....

(...)

My great-grandmother (whom I nicknamed "old granny") lived well into her 90s. I have vivid memories of her frequently smoking cigars and drinking whiskey and have recounted to many people that she did this every day up until her death. My father recently informed me that this was never the case.

(...)

I think I remember my grandfather who died when I was only one year old. We came back home from a party and I remember him dressing me up in a new little beautiful dress. The party was a town festival where there were local markets selling things like dresses, shoes, toys etc...it is weird because I think I was too young to remember something that clearly! But I do! I remember his face, his smile and when he was chatting with my parents saying like 'HOW beautiful she is in this dress?' I really don't know if it happened or if it is only a dream! I am an Italian girl and I hope you like my story. Thank you!

(...)

I remember sitting on the floor of my grandparent's living room, with my aunt on the sofa with her leg in a plaster. It turns out that I was less than a year old at the time, and the vivid memory came purely from a photo of my aunt.

(...)

My grandfather died when I was very young. For years, my only memory of him was the image of a kindly old man in a rocking chair, smoking a pipe. I mentioned this to my grandmother, who said "what rocking chair? And he never smoked a pipe." I looked again at his photograph on the mantelpiece, which I'd always known but never examined, and there he was in a heavy old armchair, a cigarette in his hand.

(...)

I can't think of any of my own false memories because at the moment I don't have anyone to validate them, but I do have a false memory my niece (who is now 23) recalled about growing up with me. She mentioned that I used to try to comb her hair but would constantly hurt her while doing so and that her mom would have to take over. I had to correct her and tell her that it was actually the other way around. The reason I was combing her hair in the first place was due her mom's lack of technique. Her mother was so upset that she was hurting her children while combing their hair, that she bought product to "untangle" the girls (her and her sister) hair but it didn't help. Being an avid reader of fashion magazines and having long hair myself, I had to demonstrate the technique I had learned to comb hair without pain. Minor as it may be, that false memory that my niece recalled has stuck with her for 17 years. Then again, maybe my memory is a false one as well.

(...)

I remembered for years being very close to an Uncle as a child. Years later, when I saw the Uncle again, he seemed very distant. Upon recollection, the closeness that I remembered was a child's wish fulfilment.

(...)

When I was six or seven, I ran away from my grandmother's house, while my mother was in hospital. I remember talking to an old lady in a subway under the railway and being returned to Gran by the police. Although the memory of the old lady and the police is strong, I can't remember running away, being picked up by the police or any other part of the day. I think that, although vivid, it is a false memory.

(...)



She was called Raymonde. Raymonde Ribeiro was a big fat stinking grandmother. She was my great stinking grandmother. I was 12; I still remember the tree trunks that served as her legs. It was not skin that covered her but bark, her veins were so large and dark that they looked like roots. When she walked she left impressions in the ground.

She turned green and gray as if consumed by a tree, though there was still no doubting her latin roots. Her name? There was no doubt was true Spanish. Her appearance brown, dull complexion and a moustache, my grandmother was Spanish. As a teenager I would proudly boast about my origins. I was part Spanish and the people would say "Oh I'm not surprised."

I am 28 years old and only 4 months ago I learned that my grandparents were Swiss. There is no Spanish blood in my family. My false memory has created my fake identity. I remain just as hairy as my grandmother...

(...)

## HOME

I was placed in a children's home. I remember being there for 6 years but in fact I was there for less than a year.

(...)

I remember as a child creeping into my living room after bedtime and seeing the floor opening up into a stadium, where millions of purple creatures discussed my daily life and were planning what my day would be like the next day. My mother was leading the meeting. It may seem like a dream but it feels like a memory. It was so real. I believed it until my late teens and sometimes go back to the belief still at the age of 23. I have never told anyone out of fear it would collapse the system.

(...)

I remember my parents almost getting a divorce.

(...)

I remember getting my hand stuck in a tin can as a child and a whole chain of adults pulling me to get my hand out, all the way to the kitchen door.

(...)

There is a derelict building in Glasgow that I have a vivid memory of sitting in with my Mum and sister as a child. I have a disproportionately heated argument with my family every time we pass it, as they maintain that they have never set foot in the building. I'm still convinced I'm right.

(...)

I have a very strong and embodied memory of walking into a room. It's quite dark, the long heavy curtains are drawn, and the room is full of browns, floorboards, rugs, floor-to-ceiling bookshelves. There's a fire in the grate, and between it and me, in a brown leather wingback chair, sits a man, resting his glass of whiskey? scotch? on the arm and staring into the fire. His shirtsleeves are rolled up to just below the elbow. As I walk towards him I can feel the weight of my skirt against my legs, and then as I stand beside him I can feel

where his legs block the heat. I sit on his lap, my back to the fire, place one hand on his cheek, and press my face into his neck below his ear. It's one of my most vivid memories. But in this memory I'm an adult, and I've had this memory since (at least) my early teens.

(...)

One morning during the October week holiday (usually the third week in October in Scotland) my brothers and I woke up and came downstairs to discover my parents had decorated the house with the Christmas decorations.

They had got confused over the date and thought it was Christmas. The decorations were to stay up until my father got back home from work. The most important of all the decorations (more than the tree, or the crib), was the poster of Paddington Bear.

For years afterwards when decorating at Christmas, I would hunt through the box for the Paddington Bear poster as it meant Christmas. We had never had a poster of Paddington Bear, never put it up at Christmas, and neither my brothers nor my parents recall a Christmas in October.

(...)

In 2010 I was unemployed and homebound most of the day. One day I got a very strong urge to smoke a cigar again. I could taste the tobacco in my mouth, could recall different times and types of cigar I'd smoked, and couldn't remember why I had ever given up smoking.

I had to phone my wife at work, and then my older brother, to confirm that I had never smoked before in my life. I now sometimes smoke cigars.

(...)

I have memories of storing childhood items and toys in an attic through a trap door in my bedroom that did not exist.

(...)

I experience this relatively often; not sure how much as an absolute value, but I would guess at least once a month. I tend to visualise things I plan to do, such as put the kettle on, or go to a room to retrieve a particular object, and I

sometimes find that I forget to do the action, but have a memory of having done so due to the visualisation beforehand.

(...)

Often in the morning, as soon as I get out of my house I have the sensation that I have left the door open, and that I need to go back to the door to find out that it is correctly locked. Every morning, as I return to check, I blame myself because I can tell that leaving the door open is only a fake memory.

(...)

MEMORY: I put my cheese in the fridge.

REALITY: It was out of the fridge.

(...)

## **BABYSITTER**

I was a teenage babysitter looking after a baby. Someone came into the room, asked to hold the baby and then dropped it. It was all resolved and no one was hurt. I have had false memories about what happened. There is no help.

(...)

The street is wide and met at one side by large white buildings with grey entrances. I'm five and in Hong Kong. My babysitter pushes my brother in a buggy. We live in a similar looking gated estate but this isn't it. One of the elderly management guys I know from the street I live in starts talking to me. We go upstairs to talk to his friends. They're playing slot machines in a smoky room with a small window facing the street. I am allowed to pull the handle on all the slot machines and am told I'm a lucky charm, an angel. The machines light up and money drops down in little clatters. I start to hear my name being yelled by my babysitter outside. She's dashing up and down the road outside looking for me. She's scared and running so fast that my brother goes flying out of the buggy and his tooth goes through his lip on the pavement. I rush down and we head to the doctors. My brother still has the scar but that's not how he got it.

(...)

My parents had been invited to a wedding, no children were allowed. I was about 4 years old - my brother was 6. We were left with some neighbours. I remember the net curtains, mustard yellow with holes as if someone had taken a sharp fingernail and dragged it down the nets from top to bottom. My brother was not in the same room. I was alone with the man of the house. Then I remember nothing but the smell of his pipe tobacco. I feel sick and wretch as I think about now. Then my brother appears in the arms of the man's wife and the room appears lighter. In the past I have thought I remembered more than this but am too unsure now. Not knowing if it is false or true can eat you up.

(...)

I was approximately 5 years old. I have a very vivid memory of running in the front door of my house after being at the babysitter's and heading to the

kitchen to see what was for dinner. There was a large glass bowl, normally used for salad, sitting on the wood countertop. I remember it being a little above eye level for me, and filled with pinky purple pieces of something mysterious. My mom told me it was octopus salad. The little suction cups are so vivid in my memory. I remember a few of them were pressed against the glass. My parents were vegetarians and insist that this never happened.

(...)

From when I was probably about 5 years old I have a strange and rather specific recollection of sitting in a dark room. The room is undefined apart from a television screen that flickers in front of me, showing cartoons. Whilst the room is dark, I know it is the daylight. I also know that there is a woman asleep in the next room. She's my minder and shouldn't be sleeping.

(...)

## SCHOOL

I remember learning to fly into the corridors of my primary school. I used one of those foam boards used for swimming class to teach myself the basic 'kicks' of flying.

(...)

I was 10 and had just come out of the lunch hall at my school. The entire field was filled with my fellow classmates. They began pointing and laughing. Terrified, I ran to the bathroom and cried. To this day, this memory has never left me. To this day, I have never found out whether this actually happened.

(...)

My false memory was when I was 6. I fell into a pond on a school trip. I was shouting for my life, the teachers and pupils watched in shock as I was drowning. No one helped me. I swam back to the platform where I was safe. I was then told to sit down and dry off for the rest of the day.

(...)

I remember being in preschool and watching older kids perform an assembly and then once it finished, I left and went to my primary school?

(...)

I remember leaving my Catholic school in kindergarten or 1st grade to go to a public school because I wanted to be with my best friend. When I told my mom about this memory, she told me I left because I was frightened of my school because it was 10 minutes away from Columbine High School in Colorado where the shootings took place. I have no recollection of this, but I suppose my mind suppressed the trauma and replaced it with a more pleasant memory.

(...)

I was about 6 when I swear I saw a combine harvester with a sweetcorn cutter cutting grass on my old primary school field. I was walking up the hill when

I saw it. I later found out that this didn't happen and that a combine harvester cannot cut grass.

(...)

I remember, when I was 4, 5, or 6 that we all had to leave school early as a bull from a neighbouring farm broke in to the schoolyard, leaving 'cow pats' all over the field. It never happened!

(...)

My primary school celebrated its centenary and I remember very vividly running down the corridor with all my friends and shouting. We were all very excited. I'm 23 now and I still remember it as if it were yesterday.

Turns out, after speaking to my mum, I wasn't actually there for that celebration. In fact I had been really grumpy at missing it.

(...)

I thought that a boy at my school (who I am now engaged to) called me ugly when I was 14/15, so I refused to go out with him. I've since been reassured by him, my friends, and his friends that no such thing happened. I have no idea why I was so convinced that this happened.

(...)

I have a very vivid memory from primary school, of accidentally pushing a pencil straight through the fleshy part of my hand between thumb and forefinger. There was no pain. I pulled the pencil out and was amazed that no blood flowed. The girl next to me screamed and that is all I remember. From what I have since learned about the anatomy of the hand, this memory cannot possibly be real, yet it is as vivid to me as any other.

(...)

I remember falling on my school playground when I was 3 or 4 and bruising my knee. I'd thought it was a massive bruise - as big as my kneecap but my mother tells me it was pretty small.

(...)



My younger sister recalled an incident that happened to me when I was in kindergarten: I had been upset by some event in my school classroom (that had made my dress dirty) and I had been punished by a horrible teacher who made me remove my dress and stand, wearing only my slip and underpants, on a box in the middle of the room while I sobbed. My sister expressed regret that I had been subjected to such bad educational practices. I was very surprised to hear this story, because it had happened not to me, but to her! I named the teacher involved and told her I was there when the school principal found out about it and called my mother to go get my sister and take her home.

My mother, who was in the house but not the room when we were discussing the event, could have verified my recollection but my sister was very startled and did not want to fact check it with anyone else. It was apparent to me that she had told this story to others before, and had believed it to be her true memory, when in fact she had only heard it from family recollections. She had similarly "recalled" other memories that featured her instead of others, that were pointed out by surprised family members at gatherings as being her false memories. A friend told me that younger siblings "always" think they were there and that things they had not even been alive for, had happened to them. This is an annoying aspect of being in families with a large number of children.

(...)

My memory of my High School's assembly area was a vast open space which easily accommodated the 500 + students who lined up there. I walked through it for the first time after 50 years and I'm amazed at how small it is! It has substantial buildings on each side, which are unchanged, so it cannot be reduced in size.

(...)

Our primary school had a small teaching kitchen attached to the assembly/lunch hall. At the end of one lunchtime (or possibly break time) as the hall was emptying out, I saw our Head stood on the top step of the kitchen while the very tall reception teacher stood a couple of steps below him. He was cradling her face and they were kissing passionately.

(...)

I very much remember my teacher in year two hitting one of my fellow classmates, called Jamal.

(...)

I clearly remember the Queen visiting our town (Birkenhead) and I was there, lining the street with my fellow school pupils. Except that the Queen came to Birkenhead in June 1953 and I was only just four and I didn't start school till I was 5. It may be that my mother took me there but I am convinced I went with my schoolmates.

(...)

Back in the 1990s I worked at a countryside, weather & astronomy centre. A visitor came in and told of a vivid memory of seeing a total eclipse of the sun, while a pupil at Hove Grammar School for Boys in the 1950s. My colleague of the same generation and a keen amateur astronomer refuted this sighting as there was no total eclipse of the sun at that time (the man was very exact about the year as he remembered the classroom, the teacher and the boys all looking out of the window at the darkened skies).

The man was adamant about his memory as a full total eclipse. We explained that the only 20th century total eclipses of the sun seen from the UK were in 1927 and 1999 so he cannot have seen one in the 1950s. We deduced that what he saw was a very dark sky incident, which is a meteorological effect and can be very dramatic especially in the summer and this has got transformed in his memory as a total eclipse. The man left us rather stunned realising that his cherished memory could not have been true.

(...)

At school, playing indoor cricket two fielders collided going for the same catch and the ball fell between them. This actually happened. I cannot remember if I was one of the fielders, or if I watched it happen.

(...)

When I was in nursery there was a point in the day when we had a biscuit and a drink, usually a digestive and some sort of diluted juice. We would all sit quietly and eat it before continuing with our day. I have a memory from this

snack time, which must be false (because it's ridiculous) but it's stayed with me all these years.

We all sat down as usual and our teacher, I think her name was Miss Clark but I'm unsure, gave us our juice as normal (blue and red plastic cups, old and scratched with teeth marks in places), but she said... "Today, instead of a biscuit we'll be having earth worms" (note: it's clear in my memory she said "earth worms" not "worms" which is a bit odd as a child would just know them as worms). She pulled out a Tupperware box full of them and gave us one each. They wriggled around on our desks and then she proceeded to take one out herself at the front of the class and eat it. I can remember looking at mine completely dumbfounded, my desk was at the front of the class on the right, I looked to my left and met gazes from other children equally in shock as to what to do... So I just sat there, with my mouth open watching my worm wriggle on my desk and glancing up at my teacher chewing her worm.

There's no memory after that - it just cuts off... So maybe it was a dream that my young mind crafted a reality out of. I must have thought about it often for it to be permanently burned into my memory, or maybe it really did happen and she was some kind of psycho nut job.

(...)

I loved a girl at high school. At first I didn't have an interest in her. One day she came to me and we talked for a long time. She told me I am not like others and she likes me. Thunder struck and I fell in love with her. We didn't have a relationship, but many years later when we were having conversation about that day, she said she didn't say such a thing. I don't know if she's lying or not, but that's all I remember.

(...)

I remember lying to my friend at school in year 2. I lied to him that I saw him brushing his teeth in his front yard as I flew above his house inside a plane. He believed me and acknowledged that he saw the plane.

(...)

## FRIENDS

On a Saturday evening, I went to a party and got pretty drunk. I distinctly remember throwing up at the party. I also remember my friend getting lost whilst being drunk, but afterwards (the day after), he told me that I didn't throw up and my mate was with me the whole night.

(...)

I had a dream about a friend called Dan who had moved college. It felt so realistic that I genuinely thought Dan had moved college. I now realise that it was just a false memory.

(...)

My friend stayed overnight at my place and in her sleep kicked over a glass of water onto the floor. The glass didn't smash, so I cleared up the spilt water and went back to sleep. She had not woken up. I told her about it the next morning. Over years the story has been re-told by my friend who now claims that she had smashed the glass over herself and woke to find me cleaning it up and carefully moving pieces of glass away from her.

(...)

I dated someone and we broke up because he had lost interest in the relationship. I wasn't too upset with him, but when I was retelling the story of what had happened to a friend, they commented, "wow, that was really awful of him!" and from then on I was angry about the situation and retold the story in a very angry light.

(...)

That my next-door neighbour was my first kiss...

(...)

When I woke up I was thinking that my friend had been with me. I opened my eyes and a question appeared in my head: "where is she?" I wanted to sleep a little bit more, so I just decided that she's in another room. But when I finally got up there was nobody else around.

(...)

Yesterday a friend shared with me a memory of seeing a Catalina vintage aircraft flying low over our cars. He recounted our conversation about it: "did you see that?" "Did I ever!" I have no recollection of this event, but curiously I am very interested in aeroplanes. So, have I forgotten an event I should remember, or is he wrongly associating me with the event because he associates me with aeroplanes? One of us is forgetful or mistaken!

(...)

I was a student at Annapolis (USNA) 1962-63. I distinctly remember my roommate from Anchorage, Alaska, being visibly upset, chain smoking, pacing around the room. His complexion was white from worry because he could not reach his family in Anchorage by phone right after a devastating earthquake.

A number of years later, I was reading about earthquakes in an almanac and saw that the earthquake in Anchorage happened on March 27, 1964, over a year and a half after I left the academy. What I remembered could not have possibly happened.

My only explanation is at the time of the earthquake, I imagined how my roommate might have reacted. Over time the imagined memory became real.

(...)

There is a railway line running behind my childhood home and I used to wave from my bedroom at my friend Julie (who I referred to always in the same way 'My-Friend-Julie') as she passed on the train. When I recounted this vivid memory to my mother in my teens she laughed and said that Julie had in fact been an imaginary friend of mine when I was very young. She had a red coat.

(...)

I walked past a cafe near Marylebone station last summer and recalled meeting some friends there several years ago. I remembered eating a bacon sandwich, having a hot drink, and talking about the music industry.

I then realised that I had never been to the cafe before and the memory was entirely from a scene I wrote in one of my novels.

(...)

In 4th grade, I remember there being a girl who was a grade above me named China. She had, as I used to call it, "fire engine red hair", so I assumed she would be rather easy for people to remember. I have asked just about every person I knew from that school, including people I remember seeing her with, and not a single person remembers her. I am the only person who does.

(...)

For many years I believed I had made a parachute jump. I was a tomboy who hero-worshipped an older boy who DID do a parachute jump. I memorised everything he said about the training, the feeling he had in the air, how to land and I have recounted that story as if it was mine for years. I really and honestly felt I had done that jump -my imagination must have been so strong I managed to feel the experience completely. I am now in my 50's and have finally realised I could not have made that jump, but I desperately wished I had back then.

(...)

About 18 years ago, when I was 16, I went with school to see *The Mousetrap*, by Agatha Christie, in London. At the end, the actors swear the audience to secrecy, so as to not spoil things for future audiences.

After the show, my friend told me that someone had broken this oath, and whispered in her ear "the butler did it." She said that she didn't want to tell me until after the show to not spoil it for me, but that this had spoiled it for her. For years I kept this to myself, believing that the butler had indeed done it, but I kept the secret.

Then last year I watched the *Mousetrap* on a tour in our local theatre and waited and waited for the butler to do it, in anticipation. I was perturbed and confused that there wasn't even a butler in it. It dawned on me after this second show that someone may have played a joke on me.

Even today, having watched the play recently, I still remember the butler doing it, even in the face of all evidence to the contrary. I can't remember as clearly who really did do it. Did I originally see a different play where the butler did indeed do it? I have only vague memories from 18 years ago of the

play itself, but memories as clear as crystal of the butler revealed at the end as doing it.

(...)

As a child, I confidently told my best friend that I used to live in a skyscraper apartment building as a baby. I vividly remembered the ironing board in the wall, the colour of the carpet, and crawling towards the front door. It wasn't until I asked my parents what city the apartment was in that they told me our family had lived in the same suburban house since before my oldest brother was born. I still didn't believe them until they showed me pictures.

(...)

I used to live in Clifford Estates, a sprawling housing development area in Guangzhou, China. Every weekend, I would set off to Nineteenth Street Park with a few friends and play amongst the trees and catch tadpoles in the pond. There was this specific tree in a circular enclave that we viewed as the "mother tree". Once, whilst inspecting it I looked down into a dark hole between the roots and glimpsed ancient looking, red Chinese characters written on the sides. No one ever remembers this story when I bring it up, and I have never been able to find the hole again.

(...)

I was at an after party and there were at least four other people with me. But I have a feeling that there was also a fifth person, sometimes it's a female, sometimes male, but in reality I don't think there was a fifth person at all.

(...)

Thirty-odd years ago, "our gang" got together to take a group picture. At the end it cost too much for one of us, so I bought his and kept it. (Should have given it to him, but that's another story. I gave it to my mom instead.) A few years ago I moved in with my mom so I could take care of her. I placed both pictures side by side, so I absolutely \*know\* I'm right. (One's more faded than the other.) Last summer some of us got together, and one of the guys talked about the portrait studio visit and getting the picture taken, and that how he was glad he had finally talked Mark into buying the picture even though he didn't want to. I just stared at him and bit my tongue.

(...)

I was convinced we'd already ordered our food and then when our waiter for the evening asked us to order I told him that we'd already done so. My hungry friend looked really worried and then told the waiter that we hadn't ordered at all and then general confusion ensued. I also often think I've written emails that I haven't.

(...)

My housemate rang me up and told me that our house had been broken into. I was convinced that on the phone we discussed a smashed window, but when I arrived there was no such thing and he was certain he didn't say anything about a smashed window! It took me a while to believe him, until I saw the state of the back door!

(...)

The organisation I work for organises a "Group Lunch" every Friday, which means that every employee receives \$8.00 for lunch and then we all eat in the conference room together. A sort of (forced) office bonding basically.

My co-worker, Jessica, usually goes around the office distributing everyone's \$8.00 a couple of hours before lunchtime. As a form of procedure she also has us sign our name on a list so she can keep track of the money she distributes and who participated in the group lunch.

One Friday I came into the office feeling a little ill (and drowsy from cough medicine), so I decided to take a sick day and leave before group lunch.

Here's the false memory: the next Friday, I am feeling much better and ready for this week's group lunch but there's no Jessica and there's no \$8.00. Confused, I decided to ask Jessica for my group lunch money. She said that even though I went home sick the week before, I still signed for the \$8.00. So she skipped me today because she thought it would even out the group lunch tally.

What?! I signed for it...she claims. Was I so drowsy from cough medicine that I forgot I took the money? Jessica is also really good at her job, so her claim that I had taken the \$8 wasn't entirely implausible. So I went to lunch that day feeling embarrassed that I forgot about taking the money. OH well, right?



Wrong. It turns out that Jessica had a false memory too. She did not have my signature. She did not give me the \$8.00. I was right! Yes, I knew it. In her face! Of course, I was seemingly annoyed that she made me think I was crazy, but she made it up to me by giving me \$8.00 later that day. We both have moved on from the false memory incident, but we both definitely double check the list whenever she comes by with the group lunch money.

So that is my tale of the missing group lunch money. Never has \$8.00 been so hotly fought over.

(...)

## ANIMALS

I remember having visited a little village in England, even though I have never been there. I remember seeing a horse charging towards me, with a little girl riding it. She was not able to control the horse, and was screaming. I tried to run after it and I managed to catch up with the horse (how is that possible?) The girl was crying and I tried to console her. Her parents came and started telling me off, thinking that I had upset her.

(...)

I was in bed and a bird flew into the room through the window. My mother and grandmother came into the room to get the bird out as it was frantically flying around the room.

(...)

When I was a young child I fell off a swing and started bleeding from my head. My parents were not home and my pet monkey came and applied pressure with its phalanges on the gash to stop the bleeding. I passed out and woke up in the hospital. I lived in Zimbabwe so it could be true.

(...)

When I was very small (around 3 or 4) I remember going into my mother's room and meeting a crab she had bought as a present to keep as a pet. I still remember this vividly. It has since transpired that this was a dream, though I remember searching my house the next day for the crab.

(...)

I have a shared false memory with my brother. When we were about 4 and 7 we visited a safari park with our family. In those days, you could get out of the car in certain parts of the park, and my brother and I dashed out of the car towards the zebras, startling them into a stampede. A park warden in a land rover spoke through a loudspeaker repeating "stand still the zebras are stampeding." We did, and the zebras ran past on both sides of us. My mum was apoplectic!!

My sister aged 9 said none of this happened, that the only excitement of the day was a hippo rolling in mud in the rain... (funny I don't remember the rain either.) And my parents don't remember either event!

(...)

I went to the zoo at Regent's Park and it was in black and white.

(...)

I remember living in my house in Ohio as a young child. I distinctly remember being attacked by a dog. It was a huge Dalmatian and I was so scared that I jumped on our outdoor table. I remember screaming and crying for my parents... we have never had a Dalmatian and I've never been attacked by a dog.

(...)

I remember when I was around 8 years old that I was laying in my bed facing my door and saw a fox running into my parents' room. The thing is my bed doesn't even face my door and my parents told me that it never happened. I convinced myself it was true.

(...)

I have a memory of being a very young child in the front yard with my parents riding a camel. I remember thinking it was the coolest thing for years and years that I had ridden a camel in my front yard in Texas as a child.

Only later did I learn that it had apparently never happened. I had told all my friends that I rode this camel, but it never happened according to my mother and father. What a great memory!

(...)

A model of a pony came to life!!! A model of a pony came alive! It was running, walking, and even dancing a jig. She even spilt my lemonade!

(...)

For many years, I'd had this extraordinary clear and potent memory of having been chased by a bull. We (I think my memory always had my mother there) were in a field, not an arena of any kind, and I was holding a red cloth. A bull

would come charging toward me then and we'd swivel, and let it go past. For the first fifteen years of my life, give or take, I could never shake of the realness of that red cloth, or the bull heading towards me -- it was only once I actually thought about the memory that I realised it didn't exist.

(...)

When I was nearly two years old I was in my pram parked outside my grandfather's butcher's shop. Someone gave me a kitten. I was convinced that I could remember this for years, but no other family member could remember it happening, nor could they remember me ever having a kitten. My mum in particular was adamant that I'd got it wrong because, as she often said, she "...wouldn't have given it house room!"

(...)

When I was a very small child I was at the beach with my family. It was a very rough day and the waves were quite large. I crawled off towards the sea and a large wave nearly caught me - my elder brother picked me up and had a go at my parents for not paying due attention. In the retelling of this story I must have misheard as I became convinced he had saved me from a whale. I told family friends, school teachers anyone who would listen - my family were very confused until they connected these dots and it transpired the wave and whale were one and the same.

(...)

I have a picture in my mind of being tied on to my mother's back as a toddler. My mother was hanging out washing and my Uncle's dog was trying to bite my feet. I have told this story over the years and now feel it must be an imaginary event.

(...)

I believed this to be a false memory. I was 16 and left with my 11-year-old brother while my parents were at our other farm 4 hours away. The creek flooded and I had to get the cows out of the paddock so I went to my neighbour and he and I, (with him carrying my young brother on his shoulders) walked across the flooded paddock and opened the gate. I grew up thinking that my memory couldn't be right - why would my parents leave me in charge of my brother? Also, I hardly knew my neighbour. I called it a false memory until I

found an old diary of mine when I was cleaning up my father's house after he died. It was true, I'd written it down exactly how I'd remembered it. Not a false memory after all. There was no one more surprised than me.

(...)

I thought that my Grandparents' poodle died because my Granddad deliberately ran it over with the lawn mower. In fact it had just died of old age.

(...)

My sisters and brother and I were convinced that my mum hurt her back (which resulted in surgery and further complications), because she fell off a horse when she was younger. Turns out it's because she has a degenerative issue - she's never fallen off a horse.

(...)

A jumbo squirrel ran into my lane at the bowling alley and got crushed by the heaviest bowling ball.

(...)

When I was very young I went to visit Castle Coch near Cardiff. For many years after I believed I had seen an owl wink at me from a rabbit hole.

(...)

I thought my family had owned a pet tortoise; I was under this impression for many years. I was recounting the time we had placed it in a box of hay in the airing cupboard (presumably for hibernation - I know this makes no sense!), when my Mother informed me that we had never owned such a creature. This was very upsetting to me and even now as an adult I still harbour a desire to own one. I can only imagine that as a very small child the Blue Peter pet tortoise had somehow captured my imagination and that this interest had been so vivid that it invaded my formative memory and become reality. God, I miss that tortoise.

(...)

As a child we used to visit a pet shop to look at the animals. I was convinced on one visit that I'd seen a pink coloured rabbit. It looked so cute and I kept asking my mum for a pink rabbit like the one in the pet shop. Mum checked with the owner, in case there had been a strange coloured rabbit there for sale one day, but the owner said they'd never had any rabbits of a strange breed, which could be mistaken for pink. They just had the usual brown and black ones.

(...)

I have a small scar on my left wrist that I remember as the result of putting my hand in a cage at the Philadelphia Zoo and being bitten by a baby monkey. My mom says that never happened (but she doesn't know how I got the scar.)

(...)

I remembered going to a barn with my uncle and sisters and finding a nest of kittens that one by one turned out to be dead.

(...)

I can clearly recall learning in class that platypuses were extinct. This may seem minor, but my sister has the same false memory. It appears we acquired this memory independently rather than one of us influencing the other. To the best of my memory the existence of platypuses had never been a topic of conversation between us until the day she heard platypuses still lived and asked me, "Weren't you taught in school they were extinct?" and I answered 'yes' without any doubt.

(...)

I remember jumping a fence to cross a field when I was little. When I got in a big bull started chasing me. I was terrified and escaped, but was never certain if it really happened.

(...)

So unlikely a memory to be real - but a real memory nonetheless: As a child of four or five playing in the back garden in Potter's Bar. I was intrigued by a tangerine sized stone and cracked it open on a paving slab. It broke almost perfectly in two and revealed a perfectly spherical space in its centre - inside

of which crouched a tiny frog. To my surprise, even at that age I instinctively realised this wasn't within the knowledge of my understanding. The frog then stirred and my memory stopped there. I assume I ran. I'm not sure if this is a false memory - but that suggests the frog was entombed alive for millennia! I'll be happy to hear what someone else thinks of it.

(...)

I was three years old and our Great Dane had just had puppies. I vividly remember playing with them - all the senses of touch, smell and sound are there. Years later when my mum asked me what I remembered about where we used to live she was very confused - there was no Great Dane apparently, or puppies! Our neighbour did own a Pekingese apparently, so that's where the idea of a dog came from maybe, although it's a very different dog. It's strange that I fabricated such a weird but vivid memory!

(...)

I had a tiny hippo as a pet, its name was Landspo. It lived in a tupperware box and kept trying to escape. I can see why. It sure was a cute hippo.

(...)

**PET PARROT:** In my childhood home we had an assortment of different pets, each inhabiting a different portion of my time growing up. The list included a pair of budgies, some goldfish, three dogs, a mouse and a parrot. The parrot, whose name I can't recall was a big colourful thing, oddly cartoonish in my memory. It used to sit untethered atop a perch on the side of my house. We eventually moved away and when I ask my parents about the bird, they say we never owned one in the first place.

(...)

Swimming with hippos: I recall swimming at a beach when I was young with hippos that were part of a fair & circus. This never really happened, but the memory is stronger than the memory of a dream. It was Willingdon beach and there WERE hippos that summer. We just were never in the ocean together, of course. I think.

(...)

One of my most vivid childhood memories takes place in a circus. I was about four and it was my first time in a real circus. I was quite in awe about it all - the colours, the sounds and the people. Following my grandpa through the crowd, holding a hand of someone I don't remember, we stepped in. I don't remember anything about the performances. The only thing I remember is when after the show, the circus ponies were brought to the ring and all the children could try and ride them. I asked my parents to take me to the ring and I was helped up on a pony that had ribbons in its mane. She was pretty and quick, quite like a dream pony. It had no saddle, just the reins and as I got on her back someone gave it a whack and it took off in a gallop around the circus ring, again and again. I just gripped its mane and went with it. It was magnificent - absolutely gorgeous.

For years I held on to that memory until I realised that, even though we did go to a circus when I was a kid, it is highly unlikely that the pony ride part is true in the form as I remember it. I am still quite afraid to ask my parents or grandparents about that day, for I fear that the memory of it might disappear, if brought into the light. No matter what happened that day, I prefer my version.

(...)

While out training as a rower in Cambridge, I remember an oar belonging to a member of our crew beheading a swan.

(...)

When I was young I had a pet mouse called Snowy. When I was walking home from school one day I had a premonition that Snowy had died. And when I got home Snowy was dead. So what was false about this? It is impossible to know the future. Either someone must have told me before I got home, or I didn't really know before I entered the house. But no matter how much I examined my memory of the event, I couldn't work out how I could have known. I can see the streets in my mind and the spot in the street that the thought came to me.

(...)

Going to an open zoo and the giraffe's head coming through the sunroof and trying to eat my mother's phone, because it was bright orange like a carrot.



(...)

I remember biting into a mouse when I was four as a child in Indonesia in order to make my brother be quiet. I was sitting outside in the garden making mud pie and he just kept talking. A mouse ran by and I bit into it. Blood filled my mouth and ran down my face. My brother and the rest of my family have assured me this has never happened.

(...)

I remember, when I was about 9 years old (25 years ago), seeing on TV a story about a woman who delivered a monkey baby. She was breast-feeding this little monkey on TV.

(...)

I remember so clearly visiting the chimpanzee enclosure at Chester zoo as a child. I'd heard about this particularly naughty chimp that used to throw stones at the glass, and when we saw him he was 30ft tall and filled the whole indoor enclosure! I was dreadfully disappointed when we returned a few years later.

(...)

I remember quite clearly my dad bringing a barn owl in the house early one morning when I was 6 or 7 years old. I remember very clearly being in my bed and the light being on in the hall, and dad appearing wearing in his work gloves and holding the owl by its legs. I remember the owl flapping its wings violently trying to get away. Some 40 years later, I brought it up to my older sister at a family gathering. She told me that it had actually happened before I was born in a house where I had never lived. Apparently, I had heard the story as a child and created a memory to fit the event. I had never believed in false memories until this became known to me.

(...)

A whirlwind of papers in the front room of a house, three doors down from ours. A cat with glowing green eyes sitting on a shelf in the corner, watching over it.

(...)

My mother heard my sister sobbing about some large insect (spider?) that was in her bedroom. They had just used a clothes hanger to remove the arachnid from the room out of the window of the first floor, and my mum rushed in asking indolently: "what, was it an elephant?"

My memory: a small coin-sized little grey elephant hanging onto a hanger, being thrown out of the window.

(...)

When I was a young child my brothers told me that we used to have a tortoise that ran away. Being about 5 at the time I had no clue that they were joking and just believed it, to the extent that I actually have a memory of the tortoise in our garden even though I know that's it's not a true memory!

(...)

I have a strong memory of being kicked in the stomach by a horse as a young child. It was in the paddock behind the garden of a country pub, that I have at been driven past many times in my life, though I can't confirm that we ever actually visited.

I remember that I was afraid to approach the horse from the front, thinking that it would bite me, so I approached from behind and it kicked me in the stomach.

If this had happened it would have caused a lot of damage, at least a broken rib or two, so you'd think my parents would remember if this had actually happened. They don't. I'm assured the incident never occurred, no matter how vivid my memory.

(...)

As a young girl, I moved from my home in Spain to Nigeria, where I would live for just under a year before moving to England.

I have very vivid memories of hearing snakes in several different places. At one point I was living in a huge house in a small village, when one day I was playing in the garden I heard a loud hiss. For some reason, I recall seeing a huge python laying in the tall grass, but my mother insists this never happened. On another occasion, when I lived in a small gated community there

was a huge storm and the walls around our house fell down revealing a jungle. My step-sister and I jumped down to explore, and I recall hearing snakes AGAIN, however my step sister has no memory of the incident.

(...)

I was 5 years old. I decided to go outside as it was a hot summer's day. I came across an ants' nest and then one by one the ants began to crawl all over me. It soon got to the point where I was completely covered in them all.

(...)

As a child, I was bitten by a venomous snake walking with my parents in a forest near Melbourne. I remember the sensory details of the incident quite clearly. As an adult I found out that this had in fact happened to an adult friend of my parents.

(...)

I believed that my father hung a dozy adder in front of my face when we were walking the cliffs in Cornwall. It actually happened to my sister.

(...)

When I was little, my dad, my sister and I were playing out in the yard. We noticed something hopping across the grass and stopped to watch it. A giant spider was coming towards us. When it moved it made the sound of springs being pulled and quickly released. It was enormous, probably about the size of a football, and bright orange. I was fascinated - we all were. I tried to capture it with a toy bucket, but as I approached it was clear even that wouldn't contain it. It kept hopping right across the yard. When it reached the fence, it flattened itself out a bit and hopped right under. We all ran to the gate and watched it hop across the road, out of view. We've never seen anything like it before or since. For a while, my dad and sister would remember the incident when I brought it up..." Remember that time we saw the giant hopping spider?" Now no one remembers but me.

(...)

## DREAMS AS MEMORIES

I remember thinking that there were monsters in our house. We had to cook them dinner, and while we were in the kitchen the other monsters ate the smallest monster. One of the monsters scratched my mum's face. After I woke up, I remembered seeing the scratch on her face as though it had really happened.

(...)

Yesterday I thought my dream was real, and I woke up still thinking I was in my dream.

(...)

When walking in the woods, I heard a scream, but it was just the wind or a dream according to my parents. I thought I had seen people arguing and someone run past me, but when I went to check they weren't there. I must have gotten a recent family day out and a film mixed together in a dream creating a 'false memory.'

(...)

When I was a child, about four years old, I went to sleep in the dark bedroom of one of my mother's relatives. When I woke up, I saw on the wall a blue light, moving like waves, and I heard a sound: a voice of a man coming from the wall. I was scared.

(...)

When I was five or six years old an enormous earthquake happened. We were at home sleeping. The memory contains pictures from crowded streets. My father was carrying me. He smelt of cigarettes and alcohol. Then I woke up. It was all a nightmare. I was never sure about it.

(...)

I remember as a child, waking up and looking out the window at night and seeing a gigantic airship, bigger than a city block, passing by our lower east

side building. It was covered in neon and glowing flashing signs, advertising different products. It was one of the most wondrous things I've ever seen.

(...)

I have a memory of my granddad holding my first-born daughter. We were sat together outside a local indoor market and she was on his knee being cuddled. I have wondered if I dreamt about the event and created a 'memory' from the dream - but can't remember it as a dream. The event could not have happened as my granddad died before my first child was born.

(...)

At four years old I was at the Zoo with my parents looking at a colourful bird in an enclosure - the bird took an interest in me and flew over to look at me at close range. It said "hello". I spoke to it and it appeared to understand me, then I asked it to fly to the back of the enclosure and back to me - it did as I asked. Suddenly my parents called me, not having seen what was going on. I always remembered this as a real memory, but as an adult I realised it was probably a dream.

(...)

In my early teens I had a dream where I dived into the River Thames at Erith and swam gleefully around the boats moored nearby. I then swam a long way upstream toward London and swam around a group of yachts, before returning to Erith.

The dream was ridiculous because I was a very poor swimmer, currents in the Thames could be very strong, and the river was a poisonous open sewer in the 1950's.

Nevertheless that dream somehow stuck in the reality file section of my brain. It continually returned as a memory of a real event and every time I had to tell myself that it couldn't have been. The memory persisted strongly for many years but gradually weakened with age. However, it is still present in my 70's. It wasn't true, or was it? No it couldn't have been.

(...)

Today, a rather vivid, probably false memory came to me, though it took me a while to remember all the details. I remember at one point (not sure when) getting a penny stuck in my knee (i.e. under my skin), and managing to get it out by myself by forcing it and breaking the skin from the inside.

I don't know if this is true or not, but it seems far too ridiculous to me to be anything like true. Perhaps it's a dream that I had a long time ago that I just remembered, or perhaps my brain did just decide to spontaneously invent this memory.

(...)

I am quite certain that I remember meeting both daughters - Sinead and Siobhan - of a lady I used to work with, but she has only ever had one daughter and Siobhan has never existed. I think I must have dreamt it.

P.S I also clearly remember being responsible for killing my grandfather by dropping a biscuit tin on his foot. I think this might not be entirely true either....

(...)

I have a vivid memory of being around 5 years old (I am 41 today), sat in the back of a van that was driving along a very bumpy road. The back of the van has 3 rows of seats, I am sat in the front row, and there are some people behind me although I can't remember who they are - we are somewhere near the farm my grandfather grew up on so, I have a feeling it must be my relatives from there. My grandparents are sitting in the front seat, my granddad is driving, and everyone is laughing very merrily. I distinctly remember my grandmother turning around to smile at me. This definitely feels like a memory, not a dream. However, neither my grandfather nor my grandmother knew how to drive.

(...)

I grew up as a wildly imaginative child in a 200-year-old house and remember finding a dead confederate soldier under our massive porch one summer day. After finding him, I told my parents, who proceeded to have the body removed and otherwise resolved the situation. It was only years later when I followed up with questions about what had happened to the man and his body, when I

was informed that a dead soldier had never been found and that I had imagined (or simply dreamt) the whole of this dramatic tale.

(...)

When I was growing up there was a neighbouring town that had this large pond with a golf course behind it. We drove by this pond every day, and for a long while I was certain that one time my mom and me had hung out with Kermit the frog beside the pond. I think I had had an extremely vivid dream where this happened but my young brain could not tell the difference between the dream and reality. I remember driving by the pond for years and always looking to see if I could spot Kermit again.

(...)

An old friend of mine from school told me this story about a nightmare he had - he dreamt it was the end of the world. It started when he looked out of his bedroom window and found himself staring at mushroom clouds and a strange orange coloured sky. He ran down the stairs out of the front door to find cover. The only place he could think of was behind our school gym, which was about five minutes from his house. He then remembers running across the main road, nearly getting knocked down, jumping over the school fence towards the gym. He then remembers turning around just before he reaches the gym, looks out across the school field to see that the whole of our estate had been obliterated. In a state of panic he ran behind the gym and curled up in a ball. He woke up aching, with blood all over his feet, not in his bed but huddled up behind the gym.

Three potential layers of distortion, my friend's dream, the reality of what the dream performed and my distorted recollection of his story.

(...)

I vividly remember falling into a hole that was covered with newspapers in our garden. My right leg was hurt and I couldn't get it out, so I yelled and my grandmother came to help me. She laughs now every time I mention this tale, reassuring me that it must have been a dream.

(...)

For a few years (not recently) in those times when you're half awake, I believed I owned a second home. It wasn't a wonderful house, it was quite shabby, small and old and in a run-down part of town ... no idea which town... I used to feel quite anxious... that I still own it but had somehow 'lost it'.

(...)

I have a recurring dream that I have a memory of killing someone and burying the body. The dream doesn't examine the memory; it is about dealing with the consequences - guilt, regret, fear etc. (yep, I know I probably need some sort of therapy).

The first time it happened, I woke up in a panic because although I knew the dream was a dream, I didn't know if the memory that provoked it was from the land of nod or the land of the living. I worked out that it was not real by trying to remember specific details like who, where, when etc. I couldn't and after dismissing some sort of 'repression' I am happy to believe everything about the dream was all imagined (as a representation of a subconscious thought about self-denial or ???)

I keep having this dream and it takes me a little while to feel calm and reassured afterwards. I no longer have to go through the 'working it out' phase, because I now have memories of having false memories to refer to.... I just hope they're not false memories of real memories of false memories. Inception, eat your heart out!

(...)

I've long had this memory, which I've only recently decided must be false, as my parents have absolutely no recollection of it. My cousin died when I was three and my only memory of him was when he and his brother came to stay at ours one weekend. Early in the morning we crept out of the house to go and play on the playground in the park behind the house before my Mum and Dad got up. I can remember running across the park, but nothing about how concerned my parents must have been on discovering that we'd gone. The fact that they don't remember it, convinces me that I must have dreamt it at some point.

(...)



Aged 13 I went on a school trip to the Lake District. There were about 20 kids staying in a lakeside cabin for 5 days. One night after dark I remember hearing splashing noises from the lake outside. A few of us went out onto the pier to look, but it was too dark. A little later, one of the kids reported seeing someone in the woods near the cabin. A teacher got into the minibus, put the headlights on and slowly drove towards the woods where this person had supposedly been. I remember walking alongside the minibus holding onto the wing-mirror. Suddenly a man in a Halloween mask jumped out from behind a tree 10 feet in front of me, screamed, then ran off. I nearly had a heart attack. The police were called. The next morning we were told that the man in the woods had escaped from a mental hospital, and the splashing in the water was a drunken man who'd drowned. I believed all this for years until I asked a couple of other kids who had been on that same school trip. None of them remembered that night happening. I can only think now that I'd imagined or dreamt the whole thing.

(...)

I remember getting lost in a national park as a 6-year-old child. I even remember the conversation with my parents. There was a hill, I said I'd go round one way and they'd go the other and we'd meet on the other side. Only when I reached the other side they weren't there. I waited. I went looking. A park ranger picked me up and I rode in the back of his open back truck. I was taken to a shop and bought ice cream. I remember hearing notice of a lost child going over the tannoy for my parents to come and pick me up, which they did. I remembered and believed all this for over 30 years until one day I asked my parents if they remember it. They both looked at me, confused, then swore blind that it never happened. I believe them, they would definitely remember something like that. At least one of them would. I now believe I'd dreamt it.

(...)

I was at my parents' house. In the middle of the night I heard the children get up and starting walking about on the upstairs landing. I got up, as quickly as possible, knowing my parents valued their sleep, and, in hushed tones, told them to go back to bed. It was then that I noticed a lady on the stairs, about halfway down, their mother - my wife. She looked at me gently, but with almost an accusation on her face. However, I could feel all the love that existed between us. This memory, all the detail, comes to me often and I often

find myself wishing the children didn't sleep walk. I'm not married, I don't know this lady, I have no children but my one remaining living parent also recalls this night and we've even exchanged details of the same memory.

(...)

I remember when I was about 5 years old that I fell asleep with my dad at a relative's house. At night I remember I woke up and I got off the bed to look through the window. In the middle of the courtyard was standing a person dressed in black with a hood. His face was shadowed. He said to me through the window that I should go back to sleep. Later, when I got older, I realised he kinda looked like how death is impersonated. My father said this never happened and that I was asleep all the time.

(...)

I have a false memory of forgetting to go to maths class throughout high school, and then arriving on the day of my final high school maths exam, without any knowledge required to complete it. This seems to have become a memory from a bad dream that I started having around the time of said exam.

(...)

I have a double false memory, which is intriguing to me. I used to believe that my earliest memory was of being taken, when very young - I assumed by my parents - to a motor racing track, and seeing a racing car, pillar box red, storming around a bend on the track. Many years later I mentioned this to my mother, who said they had never taken us kids to a motor racing track; and they would have known if anyone else had (an unlikely scenario anyway). So I then concluded that I must instead have seen this incident on TV at an early age (as the memory has a screen-like quality to it). Only later, mentioning this to my wife, she pointed out that colour TV was invented some years later. I am left now thinking that it must have been something in a dream; but I wait to see if another version comes along. As it is, I am conscious of a slight sense of loss. Early memories seem precious; and now I no longer have one...

(...)

I often confuse early childhood dreams with my early childhood experiences (reality)... For example, I recall going to a close friend's house as a young child. However, when I recollect the memory, I realise that the house was in

the middle of the moors, isolated - it was ancient and old, full of cobwebs, relics and strange Victorian antiques.

(...)

I remember watching the film "Pulp Fiction", and in the diner holdup scene toward the end seeing the two hit-men easily murder the two robbers... and then that scene being revealed to be a fantasy that 'Jules Winfield' was having. The scene then resumed, as it actually happened in the film, with no bloodshed.

Unless there's a director's cut of this movie I don't know about, this "fantasy sequence" never happened. Perhaps I dreamt it and integrated that into my memory of the movie.

(...)

My false memory is about something that I believed very strongly happened when I was very young. I am not sure of my exact age but I must have been about four or five years old when this event would have occurred.

My father was a naval officer and we once visited him on his ship. I think it was in San Pedro, but it might have been in San Diego. I became ill and was left to sleep in the cabin, long enough to have had a dream that became a memory to me. I thought that my head got stuck in a porthole, while I was alone in the cabin. I can remember two men pulling on my legs trying to free me. I believed that so strongly that I argued with my sister (who was three years older than I and was there) for years that it had really been that way. Of course she knew that it had not happened. She always attempted to convince me that I was wrong by (correctly) arguing that it was ridiculous to imagine two men pulling on my legs to free my head from being stuck. She also argued that my head was too small to have been caught in the porthole to begin with.

It is hard for me now to think I was dumb enough to believe that two men were going to free my head from being stuck in anything by pulling on my legs. But I believed it so strongly that for years nothing could shake my belief. However, when I got older (maybe ten or eleven) I finally admitted the idea was ridiculous. I had not lost the (false) memory; I just finally saw it was ridiculous. I am embarrassed now that I was stupid enough to have believed it for so long.

(...)

I have a memory, presumably from dreaming, of going to a friend's child's birthday party at a location I've never visited. I also remember people who were at the party and where I parked the car!

(...)

I was around five or six years old. In the memory, I was wearing my Winnie-the-Pooh nightdress and it was about 11 o'clock in the morning. I walked into my younger brother's room where my mother was sitting on the bed. I told her I felt ill, then vomited, but what came out looked like my tongue. This freaked me out, but my family didn't respond as though it was anything odd. When I mentioned this to my mother years later, she looked at me as though I had two heads and told me it must have been a dream. It was such a vivid memory that stuck with me for 13 years. I'm kind of disturbed to think that it was all in my head.

(...)

I had a dream about lying to my friends, and having subsequently received a text from one of them saying she had found out and I should consider our friendship over. I spent days worrying about it to find out none of it was real.

(...)

I believed for years that when I was younger my mum had fallen down our outside steps and broken her ankle. It turns out that it never happened. Perhaps it was a particularly vivid dream?

(...)

## **FAIRIES, ANGELS, GHOSTS AND IMAGINARY CHARACTERS**

I was walking by the sea with my cousin. Across the bay, not far from where we were walking, was a neo-classical architectural structure, like a small Roman temple. When looking at it, we noticed a frail white lady, twice the size of the structure, floating across the bay until she disappeared behind the trees. We ran back to our grandmother's house and told her we'd seen an angel. We swore never to tell anyone else about that day.

(...)

My mother, her friend and I were at my mother's friend's summer cottage. One day we walked across the reeds growing in the lake to get to another island. Once on the island we heard strange sounds so we hid behind a large rock. After we came out of our hiding place we saw tiny footsteps on another rock and a tiny hat next to them. It must have been an elf.

(...)

I used to stick tiny pink heart stickers all over the house when I was younger and pretend they were buttons that opened secret passageways. My parents found all except one, which still remains on my stairway.

(...)

When I was 5 years old on Christmas eve I sat on the steps in my home and heard Santa's bells ringing and I saw coloured lights through the living room door.

(...)

My false memory! A man standing in front of me – he had a yellow coloured face. Whenever I saw him, I would run away, but he came to me and caught me. Scary. What was it?

(...)

When I was a child I had an imaginary friend that was a dragon. I saw it vividly from my earliest memories until I was about age 11. She was my closest friend.

I have a detailed recollection of a bird's eye view of Wimbledon Common and the area around my house, from a flight on the back of the dragon. I know it's impossible but I remember gripping tight with my knees so as not to fall, the fear and exhilaration, the wind and the view. I know what my neighbourhood looked like from above long before Google Earth...

(...)

I saw a vision of a man standing in a doorway at work AFTER speaking about ghosts with colleagues. After this happened I remember him hitting me, but another staff member never recalls anything abnormal, and I was in the office all night. I vividly remember ripped blue jeans; dirty. Also a white t-shirt, with dirt on his face and bare feet.

(...)

I constructed an entire alternate or hidden world full of tiny fairies. But 'constructed' is the wrong word – I genuinely look back and remember seeing tiny little people flying around trees. I remember thinking I was so special because no one else could see them but me. It's one of the most real memories of childhood I have. Just sitting and watching the tiny society flying around... Silly me, everyone knows fairies only come out at night anyway.

(...)

When I was little I was convinced I had a previous life with angels. Everything was blue, angels were flying around and I was at peace.

(...)

When I was a child I had a snooker table in my bedroom and also a red metal bin which was quite large and sounded like a metal drum if it was ever kicked or knocked (so long as it wasn't full of course). My false memory is that one day, my mother, brother and I (and our dog Tessa, an English bull terrier) had arrived home one afternoon and were coming in the front door. As we came in I heard the distinctive "bong" of my bin in my room upstairs which worried me somewhat as there was no-one else in the house. When I went up to investigate I found the bin, upright, on top of the snooker table, with the bin's contents on the floor.

When I'd left earlier that day I am sure the bin was in its rightful place on the floor, with the contents still being contents.

I put this event down to ghostly activity (naturally), but now having grown into a sensible adult and no longer believing in such nonsense, I can only assume that it is some kind of false memory. Either my brain has added details into this recollection that weren't there in the first place, or I have forgotten about moving the bin earlier in the day.

Unless of course ghosts do in fact exist and I am being mocked from the netherworlds and will ultimately end up in the hell I don't believe in. What do you think?

(...)

I clearly 'remember' looking down the stairs as a five or six year old and seeing my father open the door to Santa Claus in the early 1950s. We lived in a one-up, one-down back-to-back terrace house opposite a factory. The Round Table, if it existed, did not visit housing like ours (we had no money to donate), and in any case I doubt anything of the sort happened at all in those days in West Yorkshire.

(...)

When I was a child, I was at a party in my aunt's house, which was on a horse farm. I was looking out at the horses through the window, and a young boy peeked out from behind the curtain. He whispered to me, I snuck behind the heavy curtain, and he kissed my cheek. Then I heard my mother yelling that we were leaving, so I followed. I asked my mother, aunt, everyone in my family, who the boy was, but they all insisted there were no boys there.

(...)

When I was a child I believed that I saw an angel fly past my bedroom window. As I grew older the memory remained alongside my other early memories. In time (teenage maybe early adulthood?) I realised this couldn't have been a real memory, but perhaps something I dreamed and assimilated into reality. I felt rather sad having to let go of this memory even though the angel frightened me a little because of its uncanny fly-past. I can clearly recall the angel today (I am 52) and can see that it is highly stylised, a typical

Renaissance angel on a Christmas card and slightly Pythonesque. I was bought up Catholic and in an artistic family so was familiar with angels spoken of and represented in art.

(...)

I can vividly remember being sat in my kitchen watching two fairies out of the window.

(...)

I'm still living in Edinburgh and I'm walking along Hope Street, in the New Town. It's late afternoon and the sky is overcast. Suddenly the street fills with an intense light, so powerful I have to close my eyes. I stop walking and as my eyes begin to adjust it appears as if the air is shimmering with tiny specks of light. I look across and there is woman who, like me, is standing still. Although she can only be a matter of yards away from me, she doesn't seem to have a solid form. Her figure is constantly agitated by the bright, sparkling light. I think about walking across the street and touching her to find out if she is real, when the light momentarily yellows then leaves and it is again overcast. I walk on, so does she.

(...)

When I was five years old I remember seeing ET in my mother's bedroom... as if he was actually there looking at me.

(...)

As a small child in the early 1960's I distinctly remember Santa Claus coming into my (shared) bedroom to leave presents. I had been peeping - pretending to be asleep and when I woke in the morning I found a tiny tears doll - I can still smell the plastic! I realise it must have been Dad but the memory is strong and clear! This is the first time I've ever told anyone - as an adult anyway!

(...)

As a child, I used to live on 25th street in an apartment that overlooked a dark forested mountain. My grandfather would scare me with stories of the big bad wolf and how he would come to eat me if I misbehaved. He showed me this cartoon of a wicked fox who sneaked through the wolf's red, arched door in



the mountains and caused havoc in his home. I still vividly remember gazing out at the mountain behind our flat and seeing a tiny red door in the distance - though of course this could never have happened.

(...)

My father claims that when he was a child he saw fairies. He was born in 1949 in Pyli, a small town of central Greece, in the area of Trikala. Its name means "gate" as it is the southwest gate to the mountain range of Pindos. Forests surround it and there is a river running through the town.

So the incident took place when my father was 6-7 years old. He was taken to the mountain with the boy scouts, and they spent the night in a monastery in the forest. During that night he could not sleep due to a toothache, so he was given aspirin or some other kind of painkiller. After midnight he had to get up to go to pee, of course outside, in the open air. He was really afraid; there were no lights, as electricity was not widespread at that time in those parts. So he went out of the building, towards the forest. The moon was shining. He was afraid and had a terrible pain. At that time he swears until today, he heard fairies laughing. As he approached, he saw them dancing at a glade, at a distance of 50 meters. He stepped on a wooden branch, and on hearing the sound, the fairies disappeared out of sight. He thinks it was a combination of the pain, the painkiller perhaps, his great fear and of course the stories he had heard as a child about fairies.

(...)

My mother and her (now deceased) brother adamantly maintain that at the ages of 7 and 5 they saw a fairy. (This would have been in the 1950s). They were in their upstairs bedroom, anticipating the arrival of the tooth fairy. My mother insists that a human figure the size of a Barbie doll, naked, and apparently female, was spotted outside their window. When they rushed closer for a better look, the figure, whose wings beat like a hummingbirds darted backwards and around the corner of the house. For obvious reasons, I believe this is a false memory, but what is interesting to me is that they corroborate it. My mother would periodically say to her brother even up until his death some years ago "Mike, we really did see that fairy, didn't we?" and he would simply say "Yes."

(...)

I was fairly young and my noisy family were all round in the living room. I went to the bottom of the stairs and started to climb them. At the top of the stairs was a hovering white sheet with a black belt around it! I just turned around, went back down the stairs and walked slowly back into the living room.

(...)

When I was I little I went to the window, and saw a gremlin next to the dog, it had a little coat on. I told everyone I'd seen it, but they said it was because I'd recently watched the movie Gremlins.

(...)

## **FLYING**

I was flying.

(...)

I remember walking off the edge of the roof when I was a child and walking on thin air for several feet before alighting on the climbing tree in the yard. I proceeded to jump from there and I flew to school.

(...)

I remember as a child being able to fly from the top of the stairs to the bottom. Now I know this is completely ridiculous, but my sister recalls the same memory, and the fact that we used to discuss it!!!

(...)

I remember I was about five; I was at my aunt and uncle's house feeling like superman and flying down the stairs. I woke up with a lump on my head. Moral: Listen to your parents, kids!

(...)

I was 7. I was sitting on a little table at my aunt's, in the garden.

There was another table only a few centimetres away and I wanted to reach it. So I flew. Simply. I was still sitting, but in the air for a couple of seconds. I found myself at the other table and I strongly believe that I flew there.

I'm 27 now. I'm pretty sure that I just quickly jumped, but this false memory looks incredibly real in my mind.

(...)

I vividly remember as a child jumping off the top bunk bed in my room and flying around the room. One day I tried it and fell to the floor. I went to tell my mom that I couldn't fly around my room anymore. I can't remember her response, but I imagine she didn't think much of it.

(...)

I remember one night feeling ill in bed and then all of a sudden I was flying around my room watching myself sleeping in bed. It was a strange moment seeing myself, and to this day it completely feels real and is stuck in my memory.

(...)

I'm convinced that when I was younger I used to hold my breath whilst in bed and float to the ceiling. I mean, it's impossible so it definitely didn't happen, but the feel of the ceiling and the bird's eye view of my bedroom is completely ingrained in my memory.

(...)

When I was around 6 or 7 I would drink milk and believe it would make me fly. I physically remember an uplifting feeling and flying across my living room floor and having a bird's eye view of the carpet. I asked my parents when I was about 12 and they obviously told me it was ridiculous and didn't happen. Still to this day I believe that this happened.

(...)

I remember as a child I had the ability to walk in the air. I would do front flips and such and for a really long time I really thought this was something I could do. Just recently did I come to realise that these vivid memories were in fact false and honestly, it was kind of sad for me. Having a memory that you always believed and realising that it was fake.

(...)

As a young child I remember lifting my feet at the top of the stairs in the morning and gliding downstairs without touching the steps.

(...)

When I was 3 or 4, my mother sent me to my bedroom after lunch every day for a nap. I remember being bored and jumping off my bed with ever-big leaps. Eventually I jumped off the bed with so much force that I flew right around the room and landed back on the bed.

(...)

I believed that as a child I could fly. I can remember very vividly being able to run along the pavement with my arms held out and then would easily leave the ground. I didn't understand why other people weren't able to do this!

(...)

I believed I could fly as a small child of about 2-3. I tried in vain to re-establish this ability until I was quite a bit older - about 12 I should think. I wonder if the flying memory is a common one?

(...)

I thought I had flown as a child. I would have been under 7 years old as I flew downstairs round the corner at the bottom and landed in the hallway by the kitchen door. We lived in Hyde in Cheshire at the time and moved to North Wales when I was 7. It bothered me for years although fortunately I never tried to repeat the event. I'm 75 now and still clearly remember it. I did use to have very vivid dreams, including falling off (not flying off!) a very high bridge, but I knew those were dreams.

(...)

I have a memory that I am entirely sure is false. As a small child I have a memory of being able to run on the spot and slowly levitate into the air.

This is one of two false memories that I have. Obviously it's false but when I think about it, I experience it as I would if I think of other memories. The second one is more vague. I had a dream a few years ago in which I must have done something terrible. I can't remember what it was in the dream because I actively made an effort to forget about the dream, but I often experience an associated sense of horror and shame that I know is connected to this dream.

(...)

When I was younger, I had these memories of flying. I would start to move my arms really fast, up and down, and I would lift off the ground. Then as I got older I couldn't do it anymore so I shrugged it off thinking it was because my muscle mass had decreased or that I had just gained weight. Now of course I realise that it is so completely impossible. But the thing is I remember it. It wasn't just a dream, it was reality. So of course this makes it a so called "false memory".

(...)

I can remember being able to fly as a small child. For years, in my teens I really struggled to accept that this wasn't a real memory. I still have it with me today, memories of a number of separate occasions where I quite naturally flew rather than walked between two places.

(...)

I was falling down from a plane but I landed safely on my bed

(...)

As a very young child I was convinced that I had once flown gracefully down the stairs landing perfectly in the hall. It was only as I grew up I sadly realised it was impossible.

(...)

I remember being able to fly down the stairs between the ages of 2 and 5.

(...)

## **WATER**

I distinctly remember being able to breathe underwater at a swimming lesson at The Dolphin Centre in Haywards Heath. I told my father who said I was being silly. At my next swimming lesson I tried to breathe under water again and I couldn't. Is this a false memory or a true one?

(...)

I have a memory of breathing under water in my pool in my backyard. I stayed there for 10 minutes.

(...)

I remember once I almost drowned in a swimming pool. Fortunately, my father jumped in and pulled me out and I distinctly remember breaking his wristwatch strap during the commotion. Many years later I asked if he remembered the incident in the same way and he said he'd never wore a wristwatch in his life, because his hands are too little.

(...)

When I was about 5 I remember nearly drowning in a flood in my local park. The water was as high as my waist and even higher in some parts. I recalled the memory to my mum who I remember being with me at the time and after much discussion it turned out that it was not a flood at all, but just a blocked drain. She remembers her feet and ankles got wet and that at the deepest point the water was more or less ankle sock deep on my 5-year-old legs. Also, apparently only about 100m of a path was flooded instead of the entire park.

(...)

I am convinced that I 'remember' being able to breathe underwater as a child, as long as I took tiny little breaths

(...)

I clearly recall being able to breathe under water as a child...

(...)

I clearly remember being on the beach in a small town in Scotland, with the tide rapidly coming in, and my father having to lift us to safety on the sea wall before tucking us up in a bundle of towels in his Morris Traveller, while my mother poured us hot chocolate from a red and black tartan thermos flask...

However going back years later; the beach in question does not have, and has never had, a sea wall. Further, my father never owned a Morris Traveller.

(...)

Small. I was very small with a thrift store bought diagonally rainbow-striped bathing suit. Mother boiled it before I was allowed to wear my new old suit to the public pool. Father took my brother and I. Change. Snap rubber cap on my head that pulled at the hairs around my face. Feet slapped wet tiles, brother and I bet who would be the first to emerge in sun and foot burning concrete.

He won. As always he won. He dove in with the grace of an Olympian. I saw Father just outside the green painted chain link fence. I observed the scene of wet hellions; most were on one side, only a few older ones the other. Fatuarella. In backward reasoning I assumed the less crowded the shallow end. Over I strode and jumped in.

Surprise. I furiously doggy paddled. Some fear. Wonder if I could make it to the side that was just out of my reach. Under. Chlorine filled my nose and throat. Up. Two girls were close wrapped in girl child gossip. If I can just call to them but I can almost reach the edge. Under.

This time I swallowed gagging on the chemicals and reflexively I breathed. I breathed water. Hard but I forced it back out of my lungs. Up. Paddling in curiosity. I didn't cough or spit only cleared my throat. I'm dreaming. Father is waving to the lifeguard-

Under. I heave lungs full of stinging water. Now bear down like on the potty and push it out again. I repeated it, easier this time.

One of my own appeared in a surge of white froth. They've found me! Come to take me home, my real home - not one where Mother and Father do not like me and people cruel. Strange, a merman wearing an orange tank top. It's the merpolice. They must have some uniform, blue would never do in the ocean.



He moved slick and eel like and I felt a hand on my bottom. "No one touches your body, it is your body." Mother's voice rang in my ears. I sprouted up out of the water, a blob from a straw when you suck too fast and pull away. Anger. No merpoliceman. A lifeguard. Phooey him. Father, fingers on the fence, brother standing by him.

They stare at me. Stupid helpless, foolish baby. Well phooey them too! Children paused wrapped in the sudden dramatic 'rescue.' I had not been rescued! I had been interrupted! My throat itched to wail these words but I bowed my head mumbling answers to questions.

That was how I first discovered I am amphibious. One would call me crazy. 'Deeply seeded need for importance due to a childhood of isolation and persecution,' a shrink may say. The fantasy of a child's stunted self-worth. Anger is now humour and I snicker up my sleeve. I know why people treat me differently - they are ignorant. Know why I was a meek foreigner until I recount this memory and I'm healed. My hands tremble on the rubbery surfaced keyboard. My underarms secrete the stink of excited anxious sweat. I do not go in water often, but I practice now and again. Much has transpired since that day in July. Still I know.

(...)

My \*first\* memory is false. I remember the murky green of the water in front of my eyes, having fallen in to a pond, at Forty Hall, Enfield. I was aged 2.

(...)

## **HOLIDAYS & JOURNEYS**

When I was a child I was convinced for several years that my family and I had been taken by helicopter to a beach in Cornwall. I remember feeling confused and infuriated that no one else could remember and said it didn't happen. Then one day the penny dropped and I realised it must have been a dream. I was both relieved that it all made sense and sad that my experience had not been real.

(...)

For my entire life I thought I'd been to Australia, but my mum said that I visited my aunty in Birmingham.

(...)

I was around 3 years old and I was convinced that I had been to Paris. I told all of my friends about the trip. Later, after many years, my parents revealed the truth that I had never been to Paris and that it must have been a dream!

(...)

At the head of a string of lakes, through the woods, at the end of Walmsey Lane, is a house I went to often in my childhood summers. The house never existed.

(...)

For many years I recalled going on holiday to Spain as a young child with my family. I even pictured a day trip we took to Gibraltar where I can recall seeing the monkeys running around. Even the small details such as the feeling of being scared and the taste of the ice cream were strong in my mind. Throughout my childhood it was a common and regular memory, even that of seeing pictures of the holiday. However, 15+ years later and I have just returned from my very first trip to Gibraltar. Turns out I had imagined the whole trip.

(...)

When I was about three, I went on a trip to Bruges with my family. We climbed up to the top of a tall tower (perhaps a church) and upon reaching the

top I needed the loo. I couldn't wait so my mother held me out over the edge of the tower so I could wee.

(...)

My parents and siblings left me on a beach in France. Having failed to find me (last seen swimming in the sea), they went back to the campsite. A French woman found me and passed me to another family, who bought me an ice cream and took me, via the town back to the campsite, where my family were eating their tea. I was 6 years old.

(...)

As a little girl, I went to Colorado with my family on vacation, and one of the days we were out there, we went horseback riding. I was a year too young to actually ride, so my parents lied in order to get me on a horse. I have memories of being dressed up to look older, including having lip-gloss and a small amount of makeup put on me to look more convincing. However, my mother was the one putting on makeup, not me.

(...)

I thought I'd been skiing but I never have.

(...)

As a child believed that I had a ride on a small trolley like train in my local forest. It was the most fantastic thing ever and then for years later I could not understand why I could never find it again.

(...)

Right around the time I graduated from high school 30-odd years ago, I took a canoe trip with three friends. I remember events from the trip - rainy days, tipping over in rapids and so on - and I also distinctly remember who the other three guys were.

Two years ago when we turned 50 we had a kind of collective get-together/party. It was held out of state, and I gave a ride down there to another friend from that time. As we were driving down and reminiscing, he asked if I remembered that canoe trip we'd taken. I'd have sworn he wasn't one of the

three other guys, but his memory of the details made it clear that I'm just plain wrong about that. He was definitely on that trip. There were just four of us, and we were in two canoes for a week, and camped out on the river banks, and yet I managed to be confused about who the other three guys were.

(...)

Before visiting New York in the 90's, I had little interest in that city. I thought it was ugly and the people were mean. This turned out to be completely wrong.

More importantly, as soon as the bus from the airport reached Manhattan, I had an overwhelming feeling of coming home. Not only did I love every square inch of that amazing place, but I felt like I knew it. It wasn't from TV (which is what had misled me about the city and its people). It was a memory of sensations, sights, smells, sounds, touch. I could have sworn I'd lived there for a very long while.

(...)

I visited Portmeirion in North Wales on my own in the early 1990's and I have photographs to prove it. I also have equally vivid memories of making a second visit with my wife, who I met 3 years later. However, we know from our history of holidays and trips that she has never been to that part of Wales.

On a separate note, sometimes if I try to think where the post-boxes are local to home or work, every street corner I picture in my mind's eye seems to host a bright red box! Should I seek help?

(...)

About 10 years ago, when I was 22 years old I went overseas for the first time with a group of my friends to Canada. We were in Montreal in the winter and decided that we would go dog sledding. We didn't speak a word of French, and our instructors spoke minimal English. We tried to listen carefully to the instructions they gave us, however much was lost in translation. Before we knew it I was bundled into a sled, which was to be driven by an instructor, and my two friends travelled behind - one riding in the sled and the other attempting to drive it. The course was tricky and the girls in the sled behind me had no idea what to do and were terrified and were at the mercy of the 8 or so dogs pulling the sled. The course twisted and turned and my sled

(manoeuvred by the instructor) started to break away from my friends who were left trailing behind. We rounded a bend as my friends became smaller and smaller in the distance, until finally we lost sight of them altogether.

Somewhere about this point my memory becomes hazy and my friends insist that I was indeed in the first sled, however I can clearly picture myself sitting in the second lost sled, watching the following happen to my friend attempting to drive.

I am sitting in the sled being driven by my friend and I can see the first sled drifting further and further away from ours. The panic starts to settle in my stomach as our sled is twisting and turning through the snow led by 8 wild dogs. The dogs sporadically bark and bite one another, which terrifies my friend and I even more. We understood from the very limited instructions before we began, that to brake we needed to jump onto a metal grate and the feet of the sled would embed into the snow and slow us down. The dogs began to take off at lightening speed and I screamed to my friend to slow down and break! I turned to look over my shoulder at her attempting to jump on the brake, however the metal had become thick with snow and had become slippery and icy. My friend attempted to drive in the brake a few times, however each time she slipped and was finding it difficult to stay onboard the sled. I screamed to her to break and she screamed back that she couldn't and that she was falling. I turned to find her holding onto the handles for dear life, however she had indeed slipped off and was running behind the sled too scared to let go. The terror in her eyes jolted me into action and I turned and grabbed onto her hands which were still holding the handles and told her - don't worry I've got you. She kept screaming that she was falling, and I kept holding onto her hands. Eventually the speed of the sled became too much for her and she lost her balance and fell to the ground - I still didn't let go of her hands.

She hit the ground and was being dragged along her stomach behind the sled, through snow, ice and dog poo. I told her not to worry as I was not going to let her go to which she began screaming for me to let her go! Eventually her hands slipped from mine and I watched her slide from the sled and off into the snowy field, turning a few times before coming to a stop. Whilst I love and care deeply for my friend I remember at this time turning back to look at the wild and crazy dogs that we're pulling my sled at full pace with no one to drive the sled or slow them down. The dogs got faster and faster now that our

sled was less one person and the ride got wilder and bumpier. I began screaming at the dogs to stop, however they did not understand English commands and I definitely didn't know the French word for stop! I could see a big turn approaching and I was contemplating what I should do? I was strapped into this sled with not a single soul in sight and didn't know how I could get out of this situation. To my delight we rounded the corner and there up ahead was the first sled sitting and waiting for us.

The sledding story is true and all of those events really did happen, however they didn't happen to me, because I was sitting in the first sled. I swear this memory is my own, I can feel the panic, I can remember the thoughts that raced through my head, I can see the terror in my friend's eyes, however this entire memory is a false one for me!

(...)

I was young and we were driving back from my Nana's house. It felt late. It was pitch black. What I remember the most is the size of the moon. It was emerging from the horizon so only half of it was visible, but the half I could see was huge. It towered far beyond every building, deep into the night sky and stretched wide across the skyline. I've never seen a moon like it since.

(...)

I have a very clear memory of going in a rowing boat in the dark across the sea from England to Ireland when I was two in 1964. In the rowing boat was my aunt and I was clutching my Peter Rabbit bowl.

I had been told as a child that I had been taken to Ireland on holiday, when I was two with the rest of my family and that we had gone by overnight boat. Clearly we had gone on a large passenger ferry, but I imagine that when I was first told of the journey a rowing boat was the only type of boat I knew. My aunt did not in fact go with us and I cannot vouch for whether the bowl was taken or not, but it seems unlikely.

(...)

For years I was convinced as a child that I had visited Russia with my family. It turned out I had actually been on holiday in Overstrand, Norfolk.

(...)

At around 6 years old my family and I visited relations in Australia; we took a day-trip to the 'Big Pineapple'. I remember loving it there and enjoying every minute of climbing to the top of the huge fibreglass structure to look out over the pineapple fields.

When visiting the same relations recently, I mentioned the day-trip and my aunt told me that I was freaked out by the whole place, refused to climb inside the pineapple and spent the whole day in tears.

(...)

My brother and I recently went to Carsaig Beach, Argyll and Bute, Scotland. It is a place we spent many summer holidays, as children. On the journey there my brother recalled the fantastic uninterrupted view - just the North Atlantic Ocean and the horizon. Actually, the Isle and Sound of Jura is what you really see.

(...)

I've been to China.

(...)

I had a false memory of a night spent in Colorado Springs, USA. I spent the night walking through the mountains with my boyfriend.

(...)

My brother is insistent that he remembers going by plane for a family holiday to Adelaide, South Australia, when he was a young boy. This did not happen. The only person in my family who has been to Adelaide is my father, and this was years before my brother was born.

(...)

I can distinctly remember going with my wife and parents to a casino in Connecticut years ago. My wife insists that she did not go, despite my clear recollections of walking around with her and remarking on the odd behaviours/people (an activity we do much prefer to actual gambling). Hopelessly confusing my memory is a subsequent trip there that my wife agrees

happened, trips there with my parents previously, and a visit with my wife to Atlantic City.

(...)

About thirty years ago a friend and I were climbing a mountain in Switzerland. The conditions were deteriorating when we approached the final snow/ice ridge - it was quite dangerous. We both made it to the top without incident, but when recalling the trip, my companion seems to think that we unroped as we climbed the last section. I recall we stayed roped because I remember thinking that I could jump to the opposite side of the ridge if he slipped - he was leading. I think his recollection is wrong because these days it's advised that you should unrope in such a situation, as then only one climber would fall should the worst happen - there is still debate over this. I think current thinking has therefore influenced his memory of the climb. I am certain that my recollection is the correct one.

(...)

For most of my life I thought I had been to see Japan with my parents when I was a small child. I have vivid memories of my mum wearing a kimono and those small wooden Japanese shoes (she is the type to adopt local traditional wear so this seemed normal). My dad and I were sat in a small boat and my mum was stepping into the boat. I have told many people that I have been to Japan, but that I don't remember much. Then, when I was about 24, I mentioned this to my mother in passing conversation and she looked at me like I was mad. Apparently I have never been to Japan, I concocted it all in my mind.

(...)

I once did an exchange with a French schoolboy. When I visited him I took with me a present from my parents to his, which consisted of a set of coasters with pictures on them. I have a clear recollection of my surprise when they opened the present and I found that the pictures on the coasters were completely different from those that I remember wrapping and packing in my suitcase. Perhaps this seems fairly banal, but it floored me at the time.

(...)



I have a false memory of playing around a water pipe in the sand in Saudi Arabia when I was a toddler. However this is just something I sort of invented later from looking at photographs.

(...)

I clearly remember when I was about 5 years old, that we drove to Washington, D.C. from our home in suburban Philadelphia, Pa in about 45 minutes.

I remember riding onto the expressway near our home, wedged between my brother and sister in our Impala station wagon. I remember passing Veterans' Stadium in South Philadelphia. Then I remember pulling onto the National Mall.

In reality, a Philadelphia to D.C. drive is about 220km -- normally three hours, give or take. Still, I believed that Washington was merely a quick jaunt from the expressway entrance near our home, and it took years for my perplexed parents to disabuse me of that notion. They couldn't understand why I was so frazzled that they couldn't take me back to the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum on a whim. I mean, c'mon, Dad, the museum is free and it's RIGHT THERE.

(...)

I was visiting Disneyland. I was chased through a rainbow coloured tunnel by a Disney character - a giant big-headed parrot.

(...)

I was absolutely adamant that I drove in the UK. I am Dutch and I have a Dutch driving licence. Driving in the UK means driving on the other side of the road and I clearly remember having to think about how to drive around the roundabout. The traffic was calm and after some initial hesitations, I felt quite comfortable behind the steering wheel. The one problem with this very vivid memory is that I have not been in the UK since I received my driving licence. None of it really happened, but it is in my memory.

(...)

I'm absolutely sure that I've been in a small Spanish city called Alcala de Henares but I haven't. I do have clear memories about exact places of the central

square, restaurants and streets, but it's just because my girlfriend has been there several times and told me in detail about the city.

(...)

I 'remember' how I saw a big commercial airliner driving along the road as child. Today I know it is not true, but I just have this exact memory and it feels like it really happened...

(...)

I have a clear visual memory of flying over the Sahara at sunset/sunrise when I was a child on the way to South Africa: wavy indigo shadows and peachy half-tones. But when I mentioned it to my parents a while ago they claimed it was night when we passed that part of the world, and I've never flown that way again.

(...)

I flew in a 'glider' aircraft – an airplane with no engine when I was 7 years old. When I was 16, I flew to France with my parents and couldn't believe that was actually my first flight. Still not sure.

(...)

I flew to Holland when I was about 3 or 4 with my father but I have no memory of the flight. I only remember the drive there. I don't even remember the plane journey back. Scary.

(...)

As a child, I used to visit Wales frequently on summer holidays. One year, we visited a stately home that had a painting of a quayside. I \*remember\* very vividly that as I walked alongside the painting, wet footprints appeared alongside me and disappeared as I passed. When I discussed this with my brother, he too thought he remembered this.

As an adult, I spent a good deal of time hunting for this painting. I finally found the painting at Plas Newydd on Anglesey. It's a mural of a quayside by Rex Whistler, which features a number of trompe l'oeil effects. In the centre of the picture are two wet footprints, which always seem to be pointing

towards the viewer, in the same manner that the eyes on a portrait follow one around the room.

I assume that my memory must be a combination of a real memory of seeing the painting, noting the footprints and a description of the footprints 'following me around the room'.

(...)

## FOOD

My mother woke me up; I asked her what time it was. “Midnight, time to eat” she said. We went to our dinner room and ate pasta in blue bowls that we had at the time (I was 5 years old). Years after that, I talked to my family about that memory. None of them remembered it. “It was a dream” they said. The blue bowls did exist, but it looked like we never ate at midnight!

(...)

I went on a family holiday to Greece when I was 9. There is an odd yogurt-type sweet in Greece – a jelly-like, milky food. I hadn’t any prior knowledge of any alcohol being infused in the sweet and considering it was given to me as a 9 year old, I believe there was none in it. I ate it slowly. I then had to lay down on the swinging bench (which was not physically swinging) as I felt dizzy and other-worldly.

To this day I have felt spaced-out and as though I am not really here. Did this happen or have I created something to deal with my mind? I am 23.

(...)

Leaving for work one day, I was walking to my car and I checked to see I had remembered everything I needed for the day, including a packed lunch. All ok.

At work I placed my things on my desk and started my day. At midday, I went to get my lunch and couldn't find it. Thinking some colleagues were playing a prank, I emailed them saying "Very funny, can you please return my lunch to me". No one did. I then went to my car thinking I had left it there...nothing.

Confused, I went and bought some lunch. When I arrived home that evening, I walked into the kitchen and my lunch was sitting on the bench. I have NO idea what I remember looking at in my hands earlier that day.

(...)

For years I believed I remembered my 3rd birthday and a special panda cake my mother made for me. When my grandma passed away several years ago I

found a picture in her things. I realised that my memory included the same perspective as the photo -- looking at me looking at the cake.

(...)

When I was a child I remember my dad looking after me for once. For lunch he went into the garden, picked up some worms, grilled them and made into a sandwich telling me to “eat up, it’s bacon!!!!” .....of course he denies this!

(...)

My brother is convinced that when we were children the chip pan caught fire, our mother emptied it in terror, and then I ate the chips from the floor.

(...)

I have a really vivid memory of my mother serving me dinner one evening, when I was only about 4-5 years old. It was sausages, mashed potato, vegetables and gravy. I went to go and eat the meal outside on my small trampoline, where I often ate my meals. I remember looking down into the gravy to see all of these unpleasant insects swimming around in the food. I screamed and ran indoors to show my mother. She said that I was being hysterical and naughty and that there were no insects in the food. She promptly ate the whole dish, with me watching her spooning the little black, winged bodies into her mouth, whilst she exclaimed how delicious it was and what a shame that I had missed out.

This inevitably put me off eating all of the items that were featured in that particular meal for months, years and even to this day I am a vegetarian, as I couldn't bear to eat meat after that meal. Usually I give animal cruelty and health reasons as the explanation for my vegetarianism, however when questioned recently by my mother as to why I had continued to reject meat for so many years (I am now 26 years old) I explained the real reason. I was surprised and confused to find out from her and other family members (who had been there at the time) that this had apparently never happened and that the whole episode was merely a disturbing and very vivid fabrication on my part!

(...)

My teddy bear ate pasta.

(...)

I really hate offal and I've always harboured a grudge towards my mother for forcing me to eat it during a dinner party when I was a child.

My mother, father, brother and I were visiting friends of my father; their home was a huge old mansion, which smelt very musty. We took dinner in a room, which appeared to resemble an old courthouse. The seating consisted of high, blood red leather backed chairs placed around a very long wooden table. The walls of the room were covered with dark wood panels. The room was gloomy. Dinner was served and it was steak and kidney pie. My mother knew that I did not like kidney, yet she forced me to eat it during this meal. I can remember her whispering in my ear in a cross voice, "Just shut, stop complaining and eat the bloody food". I remember sitting chewing over a piece of kidney whilst heaving; all that time my mother sat across the table glaring at me. I have no further memory of the evening beyond this point.

My mother assures me the whole story is a false memory...even the friends and mansion do not exist.

(...)

I cracked open an egg and it was filled with wires.

(...)

## FIGHTING

When I was approximately 6 years old I was visiting my older cousin's house. I recall having both of my front teeth knocked out while brawling with him in his room, with my older sister watching from the bunk bed. His mother then told me that I'd get £2 from the tooth fairy, so I placed my teeth near a sink and was given £2.

Later my parents told me that they don't remember the incident. I confronted my cousin and he said he didn't remember brawling. His mother doesn't remember either. However to this day I believe it's real. As evidence I know that I lost both teeth at the same time (photo evidence) and when I asked my older sister, she remembered the fight and that I lost both teeth at my cousin's house. There are so many perspectives that I don't know which view is real.

To this day I am a staunch believer that my version is true. I find the memory hard to release, because it's so vivid (it's the most vivid memory I recall). I think I may be using prior information to convince myself. The story at this point seems to be a half lie. My cousin remembers the fight but nothing else; my belief is he has a clear motive in not remembering knocking out my teeth - should I exact revenge!

(...)

I remember when I was 4 years old my dad came to my mother's house and fought with her. I saw the image and remember my mother asking me to run to the street and ask for help because he was beating her.

Now I have nightmares with the same scene... but my parents have lunch or dinner together with their spouses and the bad memory is still with me even though they are at peace with each other now...

(...)

I have a strong memory of being taken to a boxing match when I was a kid. I remember the heaving baying crowd, the smell of booze, and their body heat and sweat...spit flying, the sound of the punches and the dings of the bell.

My dad died 15yrs ago so I can't check to know for sure if this actually happened. I'm also a lucid dreamer so who knows!

(...)

As I child I remembered my parents fighting with vacuum cleaners. They both had one and were using the ends as swords. Only recently I realised this could not have happened. Also we only had one vacuum cleaner.

(...)

As a child, I had false memories of being beaten around the back and neck so badly that I could "will" my consciousness to leave my body so as to avoid pain. Yet I was never beaten, nor were any of my five siblings. My parents were soft-hearted, trusting, and rather permissive.

(...)

I have a false memory of being bitten by my foster sister while sitting on a washing machine. I remember her biting me, and then jumping off the machine and running to tell my foster parent what happened. I was in foster care as a BABY. I was adopted when I was 11 months old...

(...)



## ACCIDENTS

When I was a child I thought I remembered a firework launching into my eye...

(...)

When I was a kid I once ran downstairs to my parents thinking that the house was on fire so we all started running out of the house. Apparently, it never happened.

(...)

When I was younger, I had a dream that I fell down the basement stairs in my home in North Carolina when I was 3 or 4. The dream was so realistic that I genuinely believed it happened. I've asked my father and step-mother, and they both said it never happened, and there's no medical evidence of any injuries that I would have sustained from such a fall.

(...)

I got into a car accident and totalled my car and I distinctly remember 3 different cars hitting me after I hit the first car, but no cars actually hit me.

(...)

I recall rolling down the stairs in my house headfirst but I don't think I hurt myself - just a few carpet burns maybe. This never happened to me even though I believe it's true.

(...)

I was convinced that my mum got out of our car at the top of a hill and that I had to drive it. I was about 5 at the time and only found out it didn't happen when I was 8 years old.

(...)

When I was 6, I remember my brother falling down the stairs. When I was 16 I asked my mom what happened and she said it never happened.

(...)

Is a false memory a legitimised imagination? – does it appear more in children or people with active imaginations?

I remember my dad's best friend and his 3 children clinging to a surfboard, stuck in a rip on Lighthouse Beach N.S.W. Australia. My dad was swimming back to save them – BUT I was already on the beach because my father had already rescued me. I couldn't have seen the event. I'm also told that there was no surfboard. They almost died. Ambulance called – not certain if my dad was the hero. It is just the way I wanted to remember it – the best representation of the event (negative or positive).

(...)

I remember having an accident in a bus - falling slowly into the water from a bridge.

(...)

I have a strong memory of seeing a plane crash in Stockport. It was in Cheadle Hulme. A plane did actually crash in Stockport but not in Cheadle Hulme and I never actually saw it happen.

(...)

In 1969 I was on honeymoon in Majorca. For some reason my wife declined a seatbelt in the hire car, but subsequently hit her head painfully (but to my great relief not dangerously) when I had to brake moderately hard. I have a clear visual memory of her being thrown forward on my left side. In retrospect I realise that in Majorca she would have been sitting on the right, despite my visual memory.

(...)

It is 1954 or so, when I was about 3 years old. I am standing on the floor of the back seat in our Nash, with my young parents in the front seat; Dad at the wheel. We are driving in an agricultural area typical of south Florida, where we lived. I am watching out the front window, listening to my parents talk, when I see a huge truck in our lane, trying to pass a car, but he doesn't have enough time to pull in front of it and out of our lane; he will surely hit us.

However, my father reacts instantly and pulls hard to the right, jostling us pretty hard, and our car ends up in a ditch at the side of the road. Dad is swearing and we are all frightened by this near-miss. But we are alive, and uninjured, and everything is OK. // Both of my parents deny that this ever happened!

(...)

When I was about 3 years old my Granddad broke his leg by falling down a mountain in Tasmania. It wasn't until I was 15 that I learnt he'd slipped a metre down a slope as opposed to my memory of him somersaulting off a cliff face.

(...)

I have always believed I was on a plane from Italy to Gatwick in 1968 at the age of 12 and the plane overshot the runway. I have very specific memories of getting off the plane via the emergency exit, shoes in hand. Other people who were on the same plane as me have told me it never happened, but I've gone as far as checking our newspaper reports from the date to see if it was real or not.

(...)

I remember when I was three; I stumbled from upstairs, and rolled down over the stair. My mom freaked out but I was okay and continued to play around. But then when I was 17 I asked my mom if it ever happened, and my mother convinced me that it never did. I couldn't believe it at first because the memory was so real and I still can feel it.

(...)

I was around 3 years old at my grandparents and while playing on the street I fell over and tore off a bit of my ear. My grandfather took me in his arms and my mother glued back the piece of ear. Now everything looks normal, like nothing ever happened.

(...)

I remember a child falling from a McDonald's playground slide, dangerously bleeding with a crack-opened skull. My mother, having a background in healthcare, takes the kid in her arms. She hides the blood from me. She calmly

asks people to find the parents. She brings the kid to the nearest restroom and proceeds to clean him and take care of him. Later (it seemed like an eternity), the kid's mother enters the restroom only to see my mother with her bleeding son in her arms. She immediately starts to yell at my mother, accusing her of the state of her son. The way she yells seems so visceral that I start to believe what she says and I start to be scared of my own mother, even though I witnessed the whole thing.

I don't know if this ever happened because my mother does not remember it, but we both have the same tendency to involuntarily enhance or delete parts our memories.

(...)

The top of my big toe was hanging off, and I recall this happening twice. I think.

(...)

I was trapped in a well.

(...)

I have a vivid memory of burning my hand on a radiator when I was young. I remember crying, sitting on a sofa with my Mum and our cat jumping up to see what the fuss was. I even remember a conversation with my Mum about how the cat was always concerned when we cried. Trouble is no-one else remembers it. I did however burn my hand very badly on a radiator when I was about 18 months old. No way it could be the same instance, so perhaps it is a false memory based on my Mum's recollection of the actual incident? Interesting project. I remember hearing about a US case where a father (I think) was convicted of child abuse based on the children's false memory - scary stuff.

(...)

I have a distinct recollection of being very young and falling down the stairs and hurting myself (a fairly nasty fall but not needing any medical attention). However, I was not the one to fall - my older brother was.

(...)

I vividly recall sitting at the back of a bus and then standing up and moving to the front just before another vehicle collided with it from behind, smashing the rear windscreen and showering the back seat with glass and I later reflected that I could have died on my way to school. I'm pretty sure it never happened.

(...)

## HOSPITALS, ILLNESSES & INJURIES

I have a distinct memory from when I was an infant of being placed on an operating table with a giant bright light above me. I've never had such a procedure.

(...)

I went to the doctor for a mumps booster because a fellow student had contracted the illness. When I arrived they told me I shouldn't have bothered - my records said I'd had the booster during my first week of university. I was sure I hadn't; they tried to convince me I had and that it was okay to have forgotten. I now have no idea whether I can remember it or not! Sometimes I think I can picture having an injection, but I am sure that I didn't!

(...)

I remember having caught the chickenpox when I was little. It was horrible. Itching. I just hated it. My parents treated it with some white solution that came in a brown glass bottle. I remember exactly how it looked. I also remember going to the doctor and looking at all of my red itching spots. My mother told me that it never happened. I never actually had chickenpox.

(...)

I remember having a terrible whooping cough, and sitting in the corner of my front room at home crying in the dark, alone.

(...)

I was feeling very depressed a few months ago and remember asking a doctor in the A&E department of a hospital to do something sinister to me. I'm not sure what it was, it might've been to give me cancer or some kind of poisoning that would appear as a natural illness and death. (I didn't want to die but thought it was the only way out.) I remember them injecting me with something in my wrist and to support my claim, I had puncture marks and lumps under the skin, where they had lifted the tissue with the needle prior to the injection.

Afterwards, I remember the doctor saying nobody would believe me if I told them. Other medical professionals tell me it didn't (wouldn't) happen. I'm not convinced it's a false memory, or psychosis, but that's what they tell me, so I think it qualified as a non-believed memory. People will only start to believe it if I get a mysterious illness. Or maybe they won't - they'll just think it's natural.

(...)

I have an extremely vivid memory of my first blood test as a child. The doctor strapped a piece of glass across my inner elbow, and pushed the needle through the glass and into my vein. The blood spurted onto the glass, and the doctor had his sample.

Looking back now - I realise the strap was the tourniquet higher up my arm, and the glass slide was never there....and I probably looked away the entire time.... but the vivid memory has haunted me to this day - and a blood test is now my 'Room 101'

(...)

I remember having greenish scabs on my arms that smelled gassy and gangrenous when I picked at them, which I wasn't supposed to do but did anyway. There were more and more of them, pus-filled and green. I was too young to realise how serious whatever I had really was. When I think about it now I shudder, but I also remember how horribly attracted I was to the awful smell, like sin and death. Pretty gross, huh?

I asked my mother about what disease I must have had, and she said no, nothing like that had happened to me.

(...)

I distinctly remember the very first time I visited the doctor as a toddler. It was a cold and rainy September morning and I was very upset because it was Saturday and I desperately wanted to watch Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. I waited in the receptionist area for what seemed like forever until I was finally called into the doctor's office. Once inside, my mother spoke for a few moments with the otherwise friendly looking gentleman in a white coat before he turned to me and in a very condescending voice and commented on "how

much of a big boy I've become" (I didn't trust his broad smile or his shiny bald head and so I was too afraid to reply, instead choosing to hide behind my mother's dress).

Eventually, the doctor placed me on his examination table and from his bag he pulled out an ENORMOUS syringe and told me to "be brave"; my mother carefully removed my trousers and underwear and after a moment of absolute terror I felt a sharp, stinging pain in my rear-end and followed by a soft, cooling sensation. I was sour for the rest of the day.

(...)

When I was about 10 I had a memory of having my arm stitched at a local hospital but when I asked my mum she said that had never happened! I have no scar were I remember being stitched but had very detailed memories of the event. Thinking about it, it must have been a very vivid dream that I confused with reality.

(...)

I have a weird memory of being awake during a surgery at 2 ½ years old.

(...)

[http://www.braintalkcommunities.org/archives/06\\_11/showthread.php?t2115](http://www.braintalkcommunities.org/archives/06_11/showthread.php?t2115)

Here is a post I wrote when I was recovering from an operation to have a brain tumour removed in 2007. I wrote it during the "early post-op days "

"I found whilst in hospital that if my brain couldn't make sense of a situation it would fill in the gaps.....

i.e.

I was in hospital

opposite me was an soldier from the gulf war

On the tv was news footage of the war

the soldier was having welfare visits by army personnel in uniform



the soldier was having military related conversations on his army mobile phone

I was on morphine

someone had poked around in my brain a few times

I had lost my memory

As far as my brain was concerned I had done a tour of duty in the Gulf."

(...)

## CELEBRITIES

I wore pyjamas and lay in bed with Liam Neeson. We didn't fuck – only slept, next to one another, in pyjamas. This is a memory of mine.

(...)

When I was younger I believed that my sister and I were extras in Harry Potter and that I went for a meal with Daniel Radcliffe's family.

(...)

I have a false memory of watching Jessica Fletcher on "Murder She Wrote" being attacked through a window by a pterodactyl. This obviously didn't happen. I must have confused two recently watched programmes into one. It is still a very strong vivid memory.

(...)

One false memory I have is that I met my favourite band. I had a really strong physical and emotional feeling that I had met them. But I never have and probably never will.

(...)

I convinced myself that on a trip to London in 2000 when I was 5 I tripped backwards on an escalator and fell into Emma Watson, though my parents have no recollection of me falling on an escalator at any point on that trip.

(...)

Whilst on holiday a few years back I had a conversation with my husband about something that I guess is most likely a false memory:

I remember sitting at my Grandparents house some time in the late 1990s, in the chair next to the door, reading the local newspaper. An article read of a plane crash into the sea off North Northumberland, where the first person on the scene was the actor Dan Aykroyd - he was hailed a hero for calling the emergency services. Dan was visiting Northumberland, it said, as it was his favourite place in the world after he filmed here.

On research, it seems that Dan Aykroyd has never filmed anything in Northumberland, nor can I find any link with him to the county. I have even tried to check through air crash history of Northumberland - again none showing any history of events around that time. I am so convinced that this has happened that I have posted on numerous message boards over the years to try and find out if it is true (google it Dan Aykroyd Plane Crash Northumberland, if you don't believe me!) I have in fact written to Dan asking him, just to see if I was right... I never received a reply. Shame, as I even asked him round for tea if it was true (and thus he would be visiting Northumberland) and have even collected some of his DVDs to keep on my shelf just in case he ever turned up!

I guess this is a false memory after nearly 10 years of trying to find the answer.

Thanks

(...)

My mother once told me the story (I SWEAR she did) of a friend of hers, on holiday in the Highlands of Scotland, who stood next to a tall enigmatic stranger in the queue in the chip shop of a tiny village. 'Excuse me', she said, 'I hope you don't mind me saying, but you are the double of Clint Eastwood'. 'Ma'am', he replied, 'I AM Clint Eastwood'.

I dined out on that story for at least five years, before my mother denied ever telling me it.

(...)

A few weeks ago, I told a co-worker Steve that a former co-worker, Ben, hated Garrison Keillor. We thought that was hard to get our heads around. When we asked, he had never said that and he said I was having a false memory. He had told me he had once gone to see Garrison Keillor. Big difference!

(...)

I remember meeting Elton John at a bar in New York when I was about 8. I remember going to ask him for napkins and an autograph by I've asked my mother and she says that it never occurred. Even my sister remembers, but everyone else who was with us claims it is false.

(...)

I have a false memory. I am about six or seven years old with my family in New York. I found myself in a bar, you know as children do, and I profoundly believe that I met Elton John. This memory I believed for years until recently when my sister and I were speaking of this and our parents overheard us. They have assured us this never happened, however my sister and I experienced this memory. So, is this real or not real?

(...)

## **WORLD EVENTS**

I thought I remembered where I was during the attacks on America in 9/11 but according to my mom my memory is false!

(...)

I have a false memory of 9/11, where I thought that my sister had picked me up from school with my dad, but my sisters was actually at home.

(...)

I remember watching the 9/11 attacks on TV live but my mom told me she didn't pick me up from school until after it happened.

(...)

When 9/11 happened I remember my mom picking me up from school and sitting in front of the TV all day watching the news, but she actually never picked me up and when I got home she wouldn't let me watch the TV.

(...)

I vividly remember watching the 9/11 attacks take place on TV, aged 14/15, in the morning before going to secondary school. I was 9. It happened while I was at school. I was nowhere near a TV set.

(...)

I remember my housemate coming home to our shared house, telling me that she heard on the radio that a plane had crashed into the World Trade Centre. I have a clear memory of that house and that she went to her bedroom, and I turned on the TV news. However, we had stopped living in that particular house three years before 9/11. At the time of 9/11 we were sharing a house again, but in a different house. My memory has mixed up the death of Princess Diana and 9/11; same housemate, but wrong house.

(...)

I went to see the flowers laid for Princess Diana at Kensington Palace after she died. Now I think I only remember press coverage and photos.

(...)

I remember that I was revising for my O Levels while listening to England win the 1966 World Cup final on the radio. But I was only 13 and didn't actually take any O-Levels till 1968.

(...)

I have a memory of being very young and seeing the Cuban missile crisis unfold. The famous film footage of boats heading to Cuba. I know I was too young (I was born in 1960) to see it and more importantly I remember watching it in a house we moved to after it would have happened. A few years ago I was part of a graduate group looking at the cold war. We had to watch a black and white film called On the Beach. As I started watching it hit me, the memory I had was seeing the opening credits and final ending of this film as a five or six year old. At the time it terrified me as I thought it was real and subsequently interpreted it as a memory.

(...)

Watching the Challenger explode in-group in kindergarten (I wasn't in school at the time).

(...)

1984 (not 1986) space shuttle explosion.

(...)

I have a very vivid memory of watching the Challenger shuttle disaster in high school. I was standing in the Science/Media library in my school, and there was a TV on a tall metal rolling stand -- the kind that was rolled into classrooms for presentations. Several of my friends were there. I can remember exactly how I was standing in the room, where I was, the angle I was seeing the screen from, the shock of others in the room. This memory is as real and vivid as any other I have from high school.

The problem? The Challenger disaster happened two years after I graduated. When it occurred, I wasn't in that high school, or that city -- I was living in another part of the country. This memory is completely real to me, and yet I \*know\* that it's false -- it didn't happen that way. I have no idea where I really was when or if I saw the Challenger disaster on TV -- but I know for sure I wasn't where I "remember" being.

(...)

Watching the first moon landing. I clearly remember it, from inside a playpen. But... I was three, and asleep in another room. I didn't see it. But... growing up I heard the story so many times (my dad was building a brick patio that night, and had the TV on, etc.) that I can see it all clearly. But it's an invented memory, though I'll bet I could pass a polygraph about it. At the age of 40, I mentioned this to my dad, who found my "recollection" very funny. It seems that I had been asleep for quite a while, and was far from any TV. The memory is vivid, but false.

(...)

I have always remembered the television news of the assassination of John F Kennedy; I was alone in the room and vividly remember my mother overhearing the television, running in and exclaiming, "They've killed him". Not knowing anything about the Presidents of the United States, I thought she was talking about my father, so the news concerned me. I only learned some 30 years after the event that I would have been 16 months old at the time.

(...)

When I was doing my PhD in psychology, I used to teach adult education classes to bring in a few more pennies. Whenever I taught so-called "flashbulb memories", I always used the same example: everyone reported that they could remember exactly where they were, who they were with and what they were doing when they first heard the news that JFK had been shot. That was the example I always used. Although I was only 7 at the time, I could remember a newsflash on TV announcing what had happened. Being only 7, it didn't mean much to me, but I wandered through to the kitchen to tell my parents about it anyway. It was from their reaction that I realised this was something very important and dramatic. I used that example for many years and then one day happened to mention it to my Mum. "No, it wasn't like that at all," she

said. The entire "memory" was fictitious - and, interestingly, I had myself at the centre of the story as the news bearer!

(...)



## MISCELLANEOUS

I have a very strong memory of the top of the rotunda in Birmingham moving round. I've heard other people have this memory too, but it has never moved!!

(...)

I teach a research methods class with my co-worker. In class one day, when we were running a practical lab experiment, I turned to my co-worker and told her all about the time I took part in the example experiment as a student. My co-worker turned to me and told me that this was the first time that lab had been run and that my memory was impossible.

(...)

Ten years ago I was interviewing a doctor about pain for a radio programme. I clearly remember putting my arm into a bucket of ice as part of a test of pain tolerance. The agony was extraordinary as the pain slowly spread up my arm and it wasn't long before I had to withdraw my arm because the pain was too much.

A few years later I gave the tape to a producer for another programme we were doing on pain. She listened to an hour of audio, but at no point did I put my arm into the ice bucket. A man and a woman did, but I didn't.

When I put this memory into my book, a reviewer on Amazon insisted that this false memory is impossible and that I must have lied and that I'm pretending that I thought I remembered it. Interesting how alarming some people find the whole idea of false memories!

(...)

I have a false memory about pretty much everything I have to do every day of work. 'Yeah! I've done it, last week!' Guess what? It never happened. Smoking weed causes brain damage. Nobody admits that. This is the only harmful side effect.

(...)

I remember no false memories, which must be, undeniably, a false memory in itself.

(...)

As a child, I remember nothing...

(...)

I once remember being chased by people that weren't there.

(...)

My sister, her friend and I went to a concert and afterwards I couldn't remember the lead singer arriving in a hamster ball, but everyone else saw it happen.

(...)

For the longest time, I had the clearest memory of being in a hot tub... the weird part was... I was under the shade of a huge tree that was made of candy. It was so hot, the candy was literally melting and dripping stickiness on my hair, but I've been bald for most of my life. I then noticed that what I thought was hair was actually thin dried worms that clumped together on my head. I reached up and grabbed a candy-coated worm slithering down my forehead. It was the first time I tasted gummy worms... Now I know this all sounds believable, but it must be a false memory. I've never owned a hot tub in my life!

(...)

I had a memory that I was accepted into a very prestigious university - I even spoke to my husband and parents all who believed the same thing. I called the university up, to take my rightful place. The university had never heard of me.

(...)

"I came to America six months ago. In my country I am practically (to repeat the title of a famous book by Wells) the Invisible Man. Here, I am somehow visible. Here, people have read me - they have read me so much that they cross-examine me on stories I have forgotten all about. They ask me why So-and-So was silent before he answered, and I wonder who So-and-So was, why he was silent, what he answered. I hesitate to tell them the truth. I say that So-

and-So was silent before he answered because generally one is silent before one answers. And yet, all these things have made me happy. I think you are quite mistaken if you admire (I wonder if you do) my writing. But I think of it as a very generous mistake. I think that one should try to believe in things even if they let you down afterwards."

Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986), The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, Harvard University, 1967-1968.

Source: Jorge Luis Borges, This Craft of Verse, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000, p.120.

(...)

My submission is less a memory, more a philosophical query about the underlying premise that we can ever know for sure a memory is either true or false? If by definition our 'memories' are anterior to us, or are constantly being re-written through time then is it not a fallacy to talk of them as if discrete and finalised mental entities? The firing pattern model of memory works better, in other words that they are the result of associational triggers, and context, with a use/value that supersedes either archival or nostalgic purposes or pleasure for that matter.

My radical conclusion is that there is no such thing as memory per se, only questionable recording and recall, that are neither true or false, but more proof that uncertainty is the only ontological state worth cultivating. Of course this text is speculative, maybe something I cooked up to pass the time, maybe a hash of ideas that already exist. I CANNOT REMEMBER ANY MORE,

(...)

Only the most resilient trees survived the storm

Now, a bit more than five decades past a four-score-and-seven the Witness Trees hold testament to its passing; bullet scars smoothed pale along the knotted trunks.

The memories of this landscape are woven deeply, across generations, time, and loss.

Another memory is added:

A June evening, the Sun's zenith has peaked. The air is soft with humidity and the warmth of the season.

A promise is asked, and answered by the family and friends of two standing beneath the Witness Trees. Bearing witness again, this time to a commitment and memories.

(...)

It was the 1940s. I have a memory of teaching ballet to a young group of girls above a dress-maker's shop. My favourite student was named Babette. I may or may not have been married to a piano player.

(...)

all my memories are false.

I remember being born. a difficult birth from a mother who wasn't there.

a memory of christmas and death.

as life and memory progresses (i have lost some details)

i remember the smell of damp barbed wire, gas.

and will not stand in queues for food. because of the memory.

remembering or memory, filtered or fabricated.

(...)

I worked in Zambia for ten years. Later, I did a MA at SOAS - and had to write a thesis. My thesis was lined up in my head. It was to be on the development of an urban Zambian theatre. I had all the documentation in a large box in the attic. I thought I didn't need it, but of course I had to haul it out for the footnote refs. - I was absolutely stunned to see how false my memory had been to me. That happened after that, this took place 3 years earlier, this person had worked in this town, not that one... and so on. It taught me the value of documentation rather than mere human memory!

(...)

I remember writing a date in my diary in a red pen on the right hand side of the page. When I finally found it, it was in black and on the left.

(...)

I was in a family member's house in New York State during a summer holiday when I was a child. There was a tornado and I vividly remember seeing it approach from the window. We all hid in the basement. After asking my mother about it years on, she assured me this never happened.

(...)

I have a memory of my parents telling me to get out of the country because an MI5 agent was pursuing me due to the fact that someone had taken my identity and committed a crime. The whole thing was a random set of anomalies that tied this entire false event together. There were also many brief false memories inside this fake event.

(...)

After a night of heavy drinking, I remembered throwing up into my handbag during the cab ride home. The next morning I was pleasantly surprised, when I finally confronted my handbag to clean it out, that there were no traces of vomit!

(...)

Finding a golden egg amongst a pile of autumn leaves

(...)

I saw the King of Sweden walk past my office.

(...)

Waking up on a beach

(...)

My first memory is that of a large hairy man carrying me. We seemed to be flying on a motorcycle. Before that I can only remember a green light.

(...)

I believed that I had learned that reheating mushrooms made them poisonous. This "memory" was formed during a drug trip, but I had a hard time shaking it and was reluctant to eat reheated mushrooms for a long time afterward.

(...)

This is not a false memory, but a personal testimony that such thing is a custom in certain people. I have a brother and a cousin that indulge in memory creation every time we gather, and that can become a real contest between the two. "Do you remember when..." and then comes an unintentionally dull anecdote that is false in every aspect, always referring to the familial past. The inventions are intended to light up a more or less boring set of memories and they never fall into malicious fantasy, nor are designed to get a profit out of them. After so many decades, I quitted arguing "no, that never happened" and just shrug. I would only ask them to get more creative and make up really funny stories, like some other people that I know that enhance their anecdotes to the point you start to doubt their likelihood. These also belong in my family.

(...)

For years, I believed that Johnny Carson's parting wisecrack on the famous Ed Ames tomahawk throw (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGeN0QkZmmY>) was "Stay tuned for this week's episode of 'Frontier Rabbi'." Looking at a video of the scene, however, I have learned that it was "Welcome to 'Frontier Bris'" instead.

(...)

I remember when I was a child watching a TV show called "Till Death Us Do Part" and it was full of swearing including the F word, B word and C word. But years later it's been repeated on TV and the only thing that comes near to a swear word is when the main character calls someone a Silly Moo.

(...)

I am always telling my kids something is "ridiculousness". I am known for over-emphasising words, or as others will say, I have my own dictionary. It only dawned on me last week as I flipped through the television that my son's favourite show Ridiculousness was on. Studying attention and memory distortions that week made me wonder for the first time... so I asked both of my kids if I had started saying the word before the show (thinking I was original)

or if I had actually gotten it from the show. Neither of them knew. Now, every time I say something odd, I am automatically questioning if it came from someone else. As Freud stated, "Everywhere I go, I find a poet has already been there".

(...)

P-R-E-L-L Shampoo - a view of life and the cosmos based upon product advertising.

I have this clear childhood memory of a Prell Shampoo ad on television and in magazines. What I remember more than the actual product - thick, clear and a rich emerald green, was the tube. The clear plastic tube was divided into a series of globes, one for each letter of the name, and each globe held enough shampoo for one time use.

The tube became a symbol of reality for me and I always came back to it in difficult times. I would envision my interior reality as a space inside of one of those globes and they were no longer clear but dark environments. In that reality, I could wander around, floating freely, enjoying my existence for an extended period of time. But each time that I felt my back was against the wall, with no solution, I would envision myself forced up against the passageway into the next globe. In order to continue, I had to find and pass through that small opening separating the globes. As soon as I was able to accomplish this task, I was free and able to get on with my life.

That mental reality began somewhere in the 1960's and I kept it to myself. A few years ago I started looking at outdated advertisements and found a lot of images for Prell shampoo; the Tallulah Bankhead tube controversy, the unbreakable plastic tube - but never the five globes tube. It seems that this was a reality of my own.

(...)

As a child I used to dream of cartoons in colour (Scooby Doo) that I had only ever seen in black and white.

(...)

I was sure for most of my childhood that the film 'Bedknobs and Broomsticks' was just a vivid dream I had, until as a teenager I told some friends about the plot and they told me the title and assured me that it was completely real.

(...)

Walking with my family on a sidewalk in California. I remember that I had my hair in two braids that came down to my waist. I remember swinging the braids as I walked. My mom says my hair was never long and always too short for braids.

(...)

My false memory was where I was convinced I had seen a music concert at the ICA in London where the bassist had a rubber sheet across his whole face which pinned him to the back wall...turns out this was entirely the memory of someone else.

(...)

I saw Tim Henman lose at Wimbledon in the quarterfinals in 2002. This is the only time I've ever been to Wimbledon and I remember it clearly. But what actually happened was that he won, not lost

(...)

at the click of a button I destroyed my family.

glad that never happened

i am still remembering.

glad that never happened.

i still have thoughts that I was abused.

glad that never happened

i can remember being abused. glad that never happened.

(...)

There's a chequered floor and Queen music plays.



(...)

I was falling through the trees when I first began to wake up. The branches and leaves slapped me hard on the sides of my face, but I regained full consciousness when I smacked against the dank, sweaty mud. It felt like concrete. Only later would doctors tell me that mud is what saved my life, for all I could see at the time was the tattered and bullet-ridden parachute streaming down asunder upon me.

(...)

I once saw a dog humping a coconut.

(...)

Tied to a tree

(...)

Sitting in a park next to a river, with a granddad (not mine). Throwing pieces of bread to ducks that are floating down the river. The sun is out, but its late evening. A few joggers are doing their rounds near us. It is a quiet evening, with water on the river rippling gently. I was holding a balloon, and the granddad had a pipe.

(...)

I was convinced that there was a shop at the end of Galliard Road, which sold remote-controlled aeroplanes. I couldn't believe my parents that there wasn't; they had to take me there to show me. I didn't get a remote-controlled aeroplane.

(...)

## DEATH

I had a dream that I was there when my granddad passed away. I was very distressed then the next day when I was told he had died.

(...)

I have a memory that I was standing on the top of a train and the train went through a tunnel. I died.

(...)

When I was in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade one of my classmates died. He was Muslim and we were all Christians so we/I didn't know what to expect from the funeral. The result? Me remembering his body wrapped in white sheets being brutally thrown in the hole originally made for a coffin. I'm still shocked.

(...)

My great-grandma dies – A terrible memory/thought that my great-grandma dies.

(...)

False memory! Mmm... I guess my life is good. I think maybe that is not a false memory. I think I forget everything that makes me feel bad or I avoid them. My memory is awful, so sometimes I remember, but sometimes I don't remember anything. So, I remember being at my Aunt's funeral, but now I don't know if I was really there.

(...)

My false memory is from a dream I had. I dreamed my mother was still alive, living in San Diego going through treatment to get well. My family kept this from me. I woke up and thought it was real and started making plans to go visit her and find doctors to treat her locally. It was startling to realise that it was just a dream.

(...)

I remember dying.

(...)

I remember my dad showing me a newspaper article about someone I knew (but hadn't seen in years) who had passed away, apparently after a seizure. Years later, I was somewhat surprised and confused to encounter her alive.

Then just a few years ago she started having seizures. I could never figure out what had happened. Was it an X-Files Twilight Zone thing? But as I was studying False Memories it began to make sense - perhaps it was simply a false memory? I still don't know for sure, but that seems to make the most sense.

(...)

We were sitting in the kitchen eating - I was about 18. I remember my father telling us about a song he heard on the radio while at work. It was one of those shows that talked about the new releases of that week and a few people from the music industry gave their opinion.

This particular song was 'The Living Years' by Mike and the Mechanics. The song is about a father and son that didn't get on too well and they never got chance to make it up before the father died.

On the jury discussing the song was a singer/songwriter who was so moved by it, he was in tears in the studio. In turn my dad found it emotional and poignant too. I thought he was possibly telling us this because he and I were getting over a period of antagonism as I went through a 'difficult age.'

Subsequently my own father died (when I was 19) and whenever I heard the song on the radio I would take a moment to reflect about my dad telling us about it. Many years went by until I realised the song wasn't released until two or three years after my dad died.

I can't figure out what went wrong with this memory, I found it quite amusing that I had spent so many times thinking of my dad during a tune he had never even heard. I still have the memory and, even though I know it's wrong, I find it comforting.

(...)

My earliest memory is being in a pram at the bottom of a staircase, I associate this with the death of my grandmother. I don't know if this is real or dreamt, I asked my mother once but she had no recollection of a link between these events.

(...)

I remember playing with my sister in the hospital corridor where my grandfather passed away. But only my sister was taken to the hospital because I was too young.

(...)

I remember my Dad watching soccer on the TV sat in his armchair, punching the air and yelling "Yes!" at Clive Allen's second-minute goal in the 1987 FA Cup Final.

The cup final takes place in May; my father had died in April.

(...)

My mother is from Guyana and is one of six brothers and sisters. The youngest of the family drowned in a pleasure boat accident on a river when my mother was very young. I remember being told the story of how the boat capsized but Dude, who had never learnt to swim, got dragged down to the river bed by 'electric' currents never to surface again.

I'm not sure if it was my mother who said they were electric or if it was me who as a child added this in, but it was only when I recounted the tale to a friend much later that I realised just how ludicrous this sounded - of course they were just river currents not electric ones. The idea of electricity just seemed to make the whole story all the more traumatic, especially as piranhas supposedly ravaged him too.

(...)

I was convinced a girlfriend had a sister that had died at the dentist. I had even told my parents about it. Over dinner one day she said she was going to the dentist the next week. It all went quiet at the table and my mum said it must be hard for to visit the dentist after what had happened.

It turned out that this had never happened, I must have had a dream that to me became real! I had kept my own appointments secret for fear of upsetting her and never brought the subject up thinking she would talk about it when she was ready!

(...)

I have a false memory. I am young - maybe two or three years old - and I am sitting in a high chair at a dinner table in my grandmother's house. My mother and father sit to my right. To my left is my grandmother, and at the other end of the table (opposite me) is my grandfather.

I am offered a small glass of something, but told unequivocally not to bite the glass. I bite the glass and my mother gets little glass shards out of my mouth. My parents and grandmother are very concerned. My grandfather chuckles and says something along the lines of "he's a child - what did you expect?"

My false memory closes out there. Why is it false? Because my grandfather died 8 months before I was born and when I questioned my grandmother and parents about it they say it never happened.

But to me, and even though I know the memory has to be false, it is very real. My first real memory that I can recall is aged four (it is my birthday party), but I cannot think of a time I have not had this false memory.

(...)

The false memory of mine that comes most easily to mind is entirely my own fault. I'm sure I have others too, but I'm just not aware of them.

For my first piece of GCSE English coursework, I had to write a piece called 'Childhood Memories' or something similar. I decided to split mine into two - something humorous (an escaped hamster) and something sad (the death of a grandparent). The problem was, I didn't have a very strong memory of the circumstances under which my gran died. I tried to recall as much detail as I could, but I ended up with a horribly brief thing that I couldn't really submit for anyone else to read. I was aware that I might distort my memory of the event if I embellished it for effect, so I had a go at writing something else instead, but it didn't go to plan.

In the end, I filled in the details. I invented my last meeting with her, the conversation between me and my dad in which I found out the sad news, the childish questions I asked and the clichés my dad talked in, to make the information accessible to a four year old.

And now, quite predictably, I've added in those details to my actual memory of the event. I feel I've done a bit of a disservice to my gran and to my dad (who doesn't actually talk in clichés, not even to children). And I'm still a bit annoyed with myself.

(...)

I have an extremely vivid memory of Larry Hagman dying about 20 years ago. I remember it in detail. I was with my family watching the nightly news and the newscaster said he had died. About a month ago I picked up a people magazine in my mom's apartment and read an article about Dallas. I was dumbfounded to find out he was still alive. I am very unsettled about this still, especially when I found out earlier today that he had died. I have never had an experience like this before - I don't think it is a false memory, however I can't explain it.

(...)

When I was 7 my father died after a long illness. When the undertakers came to remove his body, I vividly recall watching them struggling to get him (in a body bag) round the bannister and down the stairs.

However, I know I couldn't have actually witnessed this scene, firstly, because my mother would never have allowed it, but also because I remember watching it from halfway up the wall behind the stairwell, and no human could have stood there!

I have since asked my Mum about it and she says she took me and my sister into a closed room when the undertakers arrived, and kept us in there till it was over, but I have no recollection of that!

(...)

An acquaintance was murdered and the policeman, when he conveyed the news to me at midnight on the day it happened, said I would be called as a

witness. Before going to bed that night I wrote everything down exactly as it happened. Two or three weeks later I was called to give my statement. I was sure I had all the details clear in my head but just to confirm everything before talking to the police I re-read my notes - the first time since the murder day. I was astounded to discover that my memory of the event was quite different from my notes written immediately after hearing of the event. I had been quite prepared to swear in court that my memory was correct but obviously it had been coloured by other people's ideas about the case and I had woven them into a plausible story. I used the notes.

(...)

My false memory: in 1965 while away at college, I received a very upsetting phone call from a friend informing me of her mother's death overseas. Over the years, the memory has changed - even though I KNOW this aspect of the memory is false, now when I "remember" it, I'm standing on the sidewalk in front of the dorm, talking on a cell phone. No matter that I know that part is false, when I call up the memory, I "see" myself standing there holding a cell phone to my ear.

(...)

I thought I remembered my uncle before he was killed in Vietnam but I was only 2 at the time he died.

(...)

I have a memory of my uncle and mum arguing over who got my grandmother's possessions when she passed away. They argued over the possessions and my uncle got all the antique tables, clay jugs, strange shaped chairs and various other bits and pieces, whereas my mum got nothing.

But, no - my mum recently informed me that that the possessions had been scrupulously divided between them - an entirely equitable share.

(...)

Lulu (the singer) died several years ago. I saw it on TV; she had yellow and white flowers in her hearse that spelt out her name. My mother commented on how sad it was because she was quite young. They played clips of her

songs in the news story, so it was definitely her I remember. It weirds me out now whenever I see her alive and doing something new.

(...)

**ENDS**



