

MEMOIR OF ANOTHER WORLD ●

Holly Day

“Remember this?” I inquire, holding up the indistinct plaything, a dog, maybe. “You used to take this around with you everywhere, you always had it.” I don’t know why I say it. I think it’s a test. I observe the blank gaze change to recognition as she takes the toy, turns it over and over in her small, pudgy hands before smiling brightly and nodding, “I remember this.”

It’s an awful game, this dishonesty, because I know for a fact she doesn’t remember this toy, this toy probably isn’t even hers, I may have found some other child’s toy in the back yard and just thought it was hers. I know I don’t remember this toy, this fuzzy, dirt-covered dog-thing, can barely remember when she was small enough to appreciate something like this myself.

She is consciously trying to amuse me, patronizing me, embellishing

on the pretend memories—“I called this dog ‘Scruffy,’ and we were best friends.

Scruffy thought I was his mother, and he was right.” She looks at me, waiting

for my own ridiculous additions to the story, something about how I’m this dog’s grandmother, and how I’ve missed this dog so much since it went off live in the back

yard, under the deck, and how I’m so glad that Scruffy’s found his way home

back to us again.

We take Scruffy inside and wash the dirt from the toy, dry its mangy, matted coat

with a blow-dryer, and in my head, I’m terrified at how quickly she’s adopted the idea that this toy was a defining part of her childhood.

I spend the rest of the day imagining strangers on the street stopping by her where she sits in the front yard, doodling her adventures with Scruffy on the sidewalk

in fluorescent swaths of chalk, saying, “Do you remember me? I
used to be
your mommy, daddy, big brother, remember?” I imagine her
nodding, smiling,
taking the proffered hand of the friendly stranger
put out to lead her away.