

## Without A Map

*Submission for a memoir writing contest – 400 words or less.*

The rain was coming down in a fine mist and there was mud under my boots. I could smell both, and they felt eerily familiar in a way I was too young to name.

Now I know it's called *déjà vu*; then I just knew I'd been there before. Which was confusing, because at eight years old I was pretty sure I had not.



My parents were talking about finding the school building in Old Sturbridge Village and I remember thinking “why?”, because I knew where it was. It was down the street in front of us and to the left.

My brother, who was four, followed me, jumping in puddles. My Mom was not thrilled we were both getting soaked, but my Dad said something about letting him be. What were they going to do? It was raining.

Climbing the stairs into the school felt as if I had done it a hundred times before. The floors were scuffed and the air damp. The stove in the corner was not lit as it should have been. I sat on the bench and ran my hand over the wood. It felt alive to me. The bench was hard. I sat up straight.



My parents were young, just starting out. They were loving and joyful, and we had many adventures. But we did not vacation much – in fact, this was (and is) the first family trip I could remember.

Still, everything felt so familiar that I asked my Mom whether we had ever been to this place, which was about 150 miles from where we lived on Long Island. She told me we had not. With some emphasis, I told her I had. She turned to look at me, surprised. All these years later I can't remember how she answered - I just knew it was the truth.

I know now that Old Sturbridge was and remains a "living museum" showcasing life in the post-Revolutionary War Era. But when we (inevitably) went to the gift shop at the end of the visit, I only knew I was drawn to a display of small doll house pieces. I begged to be allowed to buy a cradle and spinning wheel – I just *had* to have them.

They represented something I could not understand then – but I do now. I *had* been there before.

Just not in this lifetime.

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