

Making Memories

Author : mishi

In October of this year it will be 5 years since Stella died. Most days it seems like a lifetime ago when we held her warm weight on our lap for hours at a time on the couch and spent our days feeding her porridge, doing puppet shows and watching Dora the Explorer. I wonder sometimes who those people were sitting on the couch. So unrecognizable from who we are today. Strangers living in our house.

I was telling Aimee a few weeks ago that I feel so badly because I don't really have any memories of the boys as babies. We were there and I thought we were present, but either I was so distracted just trying to survive, or my memory refuses to go back to that place of intense fear and grief, that I have no recollection of that time when the boys were babies. Particularly Hugo. I don't remember his first word, when he first walked, what he and I did all day when I was on maternity leave with him. With Sam I have some sporadic memories, mostly connected to Stella like the first time she held him, taking them both out for Hallowe'en, watching her burp him, going for walks and feeding the birds. But Hugo— almost nothing. So one night when I was up at 2am with baby Adele, it occurred to me that through my writing, I had captured my life back them. Like a journal. I went back to my blog and I started to read.

I read entries that I haven't looked at or lay eyes on in over 4 years. It was like reading a novel for the first time. Through the writings I began to piece together what life was like for Sam and Hugo just before and just after Stella died, when my memory is a black hole. As I read more and more entries, I started to feel like I was creating the memories of them. One particular entry titled "Hug"

[Hug](#)

and one called "Happy Birthday Hugo"

[Happy Birthday Hugo](#)

were especially helpful to my learning about the early years of the boys. After I read the one called "Hug" I sat back and thought to myself, "Wow! That sounds so crazy and chaotic...how on Earth could someone deal with two such young kids?" As though I was reading a stranger's story instead of my own. I ended up staying up way too late— long after Adele was fast asleep in my arms I sat in the dark livingroom and read blog entries from the dim light of my cell phone. I did close ups of the photos and marvelled at how much Adele looks like Hugo at this age, and how cute Sam was when he used to wear little dress shirts and fedoras. It was like discovering a lost friend and catching up.

The memories I have of the boys come into clear focus around the same time we bought our cottage, Bluebird, in July of 2013. Maybe it's because that's when we started to make memories as a family experiencing things we never did with Stella– canoe rides, walks in the woods, campfires roasting marshmallows. Maybe the cottage was my reset button. I'm not really sure, but I know that I have a really hard time recalling much about them before that summer after Stella died.

Now with cottage season upon us again, I am able to watch the boys and who they have become with a genuine excitement. And little Adele wrapped snugly in my arms is a promise of the future, of making more memories with our family and keeping our promise to Stella to find joy in day to day life.

Xavier, Sam and Hugo start another summer season at the cottage:



The boys have really started to differentiate themselves. Up until now “the boys” as we call them have been bought the same things, put in the same extra-curriculars, treated the same way. But now they are asking for change. Xavier and Sam love sports and want to play baseball, hockey, do karate, run around everywhere. Hugo has no interest in sports but has a

newfound passion for building things with wood, hammers and nails. He wants to do build with lego and asked me to find him a choir to join so he can sing. It's fun watching the kids develop into individuals. It makes me excited for the future. But as with everything, it also comes with a certain sadness. Who would Stella have been? What would she have liked to do? Would she have been heading off to overnight camp with Gracie this summer?

Sam kayaking



Hugo ready to build



Aimee and I have realized that there is great normalcy in our abnormality. I know this may not make sense, but on the surface we are like all the other families. Wake up in the morning, get ready for work/school. Have conversations about what to have for dinner, bicker with kids about wearing sunscreen, eat dinner, do laundry, read kids books at night, tuck them in, clean the kitchen, pack lunches. But in between all those normal moments there is a sadness and a knowledge of something much deeper that simmers just below. The abnormality. Waking the boys up in the morning at 6:30am and remembering how for Stella that would have been a big sleep-in. The little moment as we discuss what to make for dinner when we giggle about how Stella loved edamame. The empty bottle of sunscreen we keep in the bathroom with Stella's faded name still on it from when she was at daycare. Realizing the boys don't want to read

Stella's old books anymore but are asking for ones about superheroes and construction. Tucking them into their beds with a full awareness that this is Stella's old room. Singing lullaby's to Adele and trying NOT to sing the same ones we did to Stella because it feels like we are betraying both our daughters somehow.

Adele. The only child that Stella never laid eyes on, but they are connected perhaps even more deeply than Stella and the boys. When we hold Adele and look into her sage eyes we always feel as though she knows more than she is letting on. "Little Yoda" we call her sometimes.

Adele is lovely. I've heard of babies like her, but never experienced one before. Very calm and easygoing. A good sleeper. Smiley. In so many ways she is the polar opposite of who her sister was, which makes it easier to not compare the two of them so much. When I took Adele for her 2-month appointment, the nurse did her measurements and said, "all great!". I took that to mean average and texted Aimee to say, "Another textbook baby!" —Because Stella and the boys were always in the 50th percentile for height/weight etc. so we joked our specialty was perfectly average babies. A few minutes later the Doctor came in and revealed that Adele is actually in the 90th percentile for height/weight and the 95th percentile for head circumference. I texted Aimee back.. "Actually...this one is much bigger". Another reminder that she is different. We have always known she would be, but it's helpful that she's decided the same thing!

Adele, two months:



It is my hope that with Adele I remember better than with the boys. She is our last baby so I'm trying to take it all in. To enjoy the way she flops against my chest breathing deeply through her nose, her first smiles at me, the delight the boys get from "helping" (i.e. Wanting to carry her around which terrifies me, or feeding her a bottle which they shove in her mouth and gag her with, or designating her the Pink Power Ranger in their game and "pretending" to karate chop her). I pay close attention to the exact angle her nose is turned up at, how her little hand feels grasped in mine and the feathery softness of her hair brushing against my chin as I burp her. The tiny moments are being noted.

I'm sitting in the backyard right now typing this. Adele is curled up on a picnic blanket looking

up at the leaves in the trees rustling gently in the summer breeze. Sam is riding around on his bike, going as fast as he can then braking as fast as he can to see if he can make the tires squeal. Hugo is focused on checking all the boards on the deck to see if there is a loose one he needs to put another nail in. It's a quiet, peaceful scene. A welcome break from the insanity that is usually our life. When I'm done this blog entry I will sit back in my chair, take a sip of lukewarm tea and repeat my new mantra with the knowledge that we are okay.

“Patience in the Present. Faith in the Future. Joy in the Moment”

Sam and Hugo relaxing at the cottage:



Finding worms on a rainy day:



Day with me at the zoo:



Smiley Adele:



Stella at Riverdale Farm, summer 2010. Age 14 months:

