

My First Memory

When I was small, I had an uncle who was my father's brother. He was called Abdel. He was my favourite person after my parents, and he always hugged me and brought me sweets when he called. He was a Muslim, the only one in our family. There was a local Muslim saint who had died many years before. People had built a statue memorial of him and the locals used to go there to pray. I don't know how, but my uncle Abdel became devoted to the shrine as well. In those days no-one cared what religion anyone was.

One day, when he came, he said there was a fair coming to town and did I want to go? I was very excited and he sat me on his pony and led us through the crowds. There were jugglers and clowns, as I remember, and lots of food stalls. We tried everything and it was the first real memory of my childhood. I can't remember going home because I fell asleep on the way back. When I woke up, in my bed at home, my uncle had left a toy, a cloth doll. It became my favourite toy. And that's the story of my first real memory.

Do I still have the doll?

No, it was lost somewhere on the journey from Fujairah to Oman.