

Thanks, for the Memory

by Jack Woods

I

"Its beautiful."

I'm losing track, falling in and out of memories, to and from reality, you are surrounding me; from the past to present to the future, we find each other every time.

You lean on the railing, talking to six of your friends but looking for some real excitement; for a moment.

I come back to the present, your eyes the only thing locking me to here and now.

"What do you see?"

You look at me, lost in conversation but catching my eyes nonetheless.

"I am you."

A strange sensation passes through, as if this man was entering you like a private eye, searching your depths and hopes. There is more, you think, he stands out.

"Show me..."

He walks over and asks for a light, offering to share his cigarette with you; you are not much of a smoker but in his presence you both resonate, distorting rules and reality out of spite.

"I remember... when we met."

"I know."

"Our memory is the story we get to keep from experience."

"Then show me ours."

"Come here..." I said taking your hand guiding you into the bed. We knew it would happen; we have been here before.

There is a reason everyone remembers every lay, sex is refereed to as "a little death," its ecstasy comparing to the enlightenment and transcendence of being, and we connected, two souls culminating into one astral being projected through one

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another. We convulsed, and I travelled with you, revealing my memories of everything.

II

“What the hell was that?” I asked.

The light subsided and I turned to see a man holding a camera, giving the thumbs up.

“Just taking a photo of you and the girls.”

We are Charlie, we are six, our father is dropping us at football, good luck son he says. We are on the oval, we are kicking the ball, we miss the shot, he comes down to the field and says; I'm disappointed, strange, we feel like we have let him down, we begin taking photos so we never miss a shot...

“You're incriminating our moments!”

“I'm just taking photos, how else will we know what happened?”

“Wouldn't that make remembering pointless?”

“Are you kidding, then he couldn't *show* all his friends,” giggles a girl behind me.

“I'll stick to the old fashioned way thanks.”

I was sick of the old fashioned way. The new world united us through experience; memories uploaded onto the web every second so we can live behind a mask, using mediums eyes to witness college pranks, literary lectures and endless karaoke. It's all here, at the lift of a finger. My body is an extrapolation, an exception to the rule, I might be very perceptive, or I may have a disease of some kind, but I'd rather be happy than right.

The night had been a mare. My apartment housed thirty bodies stuffed and sweating in its two-bedroom entirety and my mind was on the verge of exploding. Memories flooded through me; a constant cinematic detaching me from reality. I had strayed, consuming two tablets and a rail. I was wired, my brain in a state of

super perception. I could no longer control the memories I saw or the triggers initiating the switch. No idle photographic carousels that frequent the minds of the public, they were living, breathing moments. Wasn't it enough that the moment of the present wafted and caressed my senses? I wanted peace.

Memories are possessive; they are what make us individual. It is our sequence of events alone, only to be shared in experience and lost in the stories of Chinese whispers. But when we share an experience, our consciousness unites, and the memory splits itself into point of view and stores itself in separate vessels, bonding us to this one point in time. The more that is experienced, or the greater the event, the more there is linking us in this lonely world. You can connect yourself to anyone on the planet through six acquaintances, it is proven; six is the cross section of individuality. Six-six-six. The perfect experience dispersed into the six-degrees of Memoration.

A memory can be triggered by the faintest touch, a brief smell, a shift of body language, or even a state of mind; anything considered reminisce. You can control them as much as possibility. People betray their memories. Identity is memory, and every idiosyncrasy reveals its source for me to grasp and venture into. No one is the wiser.

No one can know, how can you trust a man who knows the real you? Who, as a whisper, soft, gentle, caresses the innermost thoughts of a person who does not want to admit are there. Everyone is scared of true connection, because it can be lost.

When made, however, it is like the experience of personal memory in the real world; the instigator inflaming the senses and, in a flash, it comes and goes. The experience is vivid. It feels like each passing second is re-lived and each concept passing in one's mind thought anew, we are in control, but we are linear.

"Can I get a...." And an arm wrapping itself around my head stops me.

III

We are Ben, we are in bed in a luxurious house overlooking Amsterdam, we wonder where our princess is and walk to the kitchen, finding a note, "My prince, I have gone to the hospital, I get off at eight, after last night your welcome to help yourself to food, your cloths are in the wash and there are spares in the closet." Score, we have to call Nick, "Oi, you wouldn't believe...."

"Heey brother, have a drink," said Ben grabbing the closest girl with alcohol and pushing her my way,

"This is Jack. Jack this is..."

We are Lucy, we are standing on the dune filtering sand between our toes, letting the sea air carry salt up our nose, we are watching the sun set over the tankers travelling the horizon, they know life, we think, they cruise to the pink glow of the diminishing orange from the battalion sunrise of the sun and moon, both fighting for the sky against hidden machinations of Earth's inner workings. We feel their futility as they repeat themselves in work, they are searching the same places for something undiscovered, but no matter how they journey, the destination remains the same.

Strange, I remember that memory.

"...Lucy," Ben finishes.

"Pleased to meet you." I extend my hand,

"Actually, we've met before..."

We are at a party, a man walks up to us and says, "how is your search going?" what is this guy on about, he makes us laugh and introduces himself, "I'm Jack, pleased to meet you,"...

"I remember."

"Reeally?"

"Yeah, I walked up to you and asked about your search."

"I'm surprised."

"I never forget."

"You are funny Mr. Jack--"

"Billy..."

We are Nick, we are in New-Quay, we are in a car driving past the pub, stop at the infamous corner, now past the famous corner, everyone is bumping rails as the drive continues, "hit me up," we say finding the need for another too great to resist. We look down, his thirst was now my thirst, your thirst, our thirst; Bang! The senses inflame, there it is, why it is, how it is, perceptive of us, "There's Father Time... Oi, what's the time Mr Wolf?" the man starred into oblivion, "six-thirty-one." We look at the clock in the car and began laughing, "What a tripper, how's he get it every time?"

"..my friend, you know you want one" said Nick.

"For sure, calms my nevers... I mean nerves," I replied as he handed me the smoking utensil.

"She's already packed to go, lets get weird--"

"Don't make me laugh..." I put my mouth to the device, preparing to smoke....

IV

We are Billy, we are a utensil to smoke out of, we sit in a room full of vacant eyes glazed over in the silence of settled boredom, we wish someone would clean us, for something people inhale from there is a disgraceful resin collecting which we can no longer filter, we are hurting their lungs when all we want to do is allow for calming relaxation and spontaneity, We are the cancer givers, a life no one should be living, but we have faith still, that these people will better themselves, for their own sake, for my own sake; Jack, wake up...

I ignite the light and pull the tea through the piece and into the water, so only the smoke kissed my lips.

"I can't believe you did that in front of me, that's foul."

"Fuck off Bronte." Nick said flicking the cigarette at her like disposable income.

"Don't hurt the Billy's feelings."

"It doesn't have feelings Jack, it's an object."

"If an object has memories, it must have feelings, true?"

"How can an object remember..."

We are Bronte, we are telling our mothers about a boy, a boy whom introduced us to passion and truth, we are now in a foreign room with the boy, curls hanging over our face as he kisses us, he stops and stares, "...what?" we say, unsure, "you, your beautiful," "how?" "This scar," he peeled back our hair to reveal the scar on our neck, he touches it, we are in a back yard, we trip and fall and a stake whisks the nape of our neck as we narrowly avoid getting impaled, we could have been stripped of life then and there. We are back in the boy's room, "it shows how memories boil to the surface, regardless, and you wear yours with honour." "This scar, its from a narrow miss, I could have been dead," "but you are alive, we are alive." "the day will come," we say and he smiles, "you understand" and we connect, in body and mind and history, he was no boy, he was a man. We are back with mother, sitting, still crying, she turns to us and says, "If it was beautiful, then severance hurts."...

...its not alive--"

"I am sorry Bronte."

"What are you sorry about?"

"I held you in no esteem, your scar is beautiful," she blushed,

"You right man, want another one?" interjects Nick

"Nah, I'm sweet, lets go OUT!" and everyone cheers, the crowd is convulsing memories like our convoluted bodies from inhalation and digestion.

We are the living revering the dead, we fear--

Lucy left.

We are writers telling stories, we bias--

Ben left.

We are dancers expressing the moment, we convulse--

Nick left.

We are women running from the past, we repress--

Bronte left.

We are men afraid of the future, we predict--

Charlie snapped a “leaving shot” before disappearing.

My mind emptied. The rest followed after as I hung back, waiting in the beautiful silence for them to get a head start. I needed a break from cognition, from the endless encoding and storage.

“What are you doing back here?” Came the mysterious voice I recognized from the kitchen.

“About to lock up, what are...” Her eyes caught mine, immediately sucking me into them...

V

We are You, we have been here before, we cannot see, we feel, we feel a triumph of passionate ecstasy, we know each other, we are each other, but more, I can feel you here, with me, watching as if my life were a memory, and my death the spectacle when viewed in its entirety, death is the stamp for memoric filing, we are entwined, the four of us, in mere moments I would begin showing Sarha a memory reserved for you, was I being sucked back to reality, from a memory, or was she showing me a moment of perfection with you in our future, leaving me years to prepare myself?...

“Sarha?”

“How did you know my name?”

“I can read people.”

“Okay then who am I?”

We are questioning our existence, we are in a room, we are moving forward, as always, but we are worried, we are leaving people behind, no one can keep up, people around us are stuck in yesterday waiting for tomorrow, they are forgetting, they are taking photos and conversing in verbatim, they say they are going places, to see the world, to see her majesty, but we must carry them with us, dragging them around the globe as they say “remember when...”

“An individual of perpetual motion.”

We are standing before Bronte's friend, we are wary, untrustful, but intrigued, his response was as individual as he

claimed we are, is he going forward too, he has an air of learning from the past, maybe that is what is different about him, maybe he uses the past to move forward, learning from mistakes instead of letting them suffocate him.

"What is your name, Jack?"

"...Jack." I reply in confusion.

"So, Jack, how'd you know my name?"

"I read memories."

"True, or we have met before, cigarette?"

"Okay... whereabouts?"

"You'll just have to remember." And she smiled

"...Somehow, when I saw you, I saw my death."

She looked at me, hard, what had I revealed to her, in my resignation of control in the excitement of the moment, and then I understood; together we are time, you are my counterpart, if one child was born able to search the past, there must be another, existing in opposition, embodying the future. I can feel you hovering in cinema of my vision as I reveal the beauty and the deception of my true understanding of your soul, from futures far away. We are linked through the fantastic.

"Come upstairs, I want to show you something..."

And I knew what she was going to do before she did it, for it had already happened. She took my hand, bringing my body closer, and we connected in the wombal copulation, and I was transported back to the moment of my death, but this time it was permanent. Instead of showing me the future she took my future self back to where it should be, to my Time. We separated, Jack and Sarha watched behind our vision, voyeurs of what is to come, as I lay dying in your arms realising I cannot hide in history forever.

Memories are the things that make us who we are, give us our identity, but if we have multiple peoples recollections, it would make me an amalgamation of all that has been; I am the person everyone wishes they could change. You are Sarha's future identity, you are the person everyone wants to be; you are someone else.

My nerves were deteriorating, almost incapacitated from the bombardment of cinematic. I could feel death hanging over my shoulder. Harnessing all my heart, I try and stay in the moment for one last time before I fade into a memory of memories. I look over to tell you, Sarha, how I feel, the old fashioned way,

“We are on a beach, you throw sand at me, I laugh as your father chases me down the street; we are running, hunted by a taxi driver after his fare money, but you lost your purse; in a bar on the roof of a skyscraper; we think it's a good idea to have a paper fight; we are throwing your money at the dealer when he says he doesn't take coins.”

My body starts going limp, I was being suffocated by the memories I once stole.

We are at home, starrng, naked, searching each other's souls for who we are,

Your body convulses, trying to give me life.

We are Sarha and we are Jack, we are you and we are I, we are Ben and Charlie, Nick and Lucy and Bronte and Billy; In death we are united and we are complete.

My soul begins evaporating; Jack and Sarha delivered back to history to live out their lives.

We are connected, united by a single consciousness, never broken, only divided in memory; our cultures memory, our fathers memory and mothers memory, all mutilating our own history in passing moments as we make informed decisions. We can all learn from each other's mistakes, but we do not. And for the first time, I feel the essence of true connection.

And I am gone. Forgotten, like a memory.

VI

You keep the photo from the night we first met in your pocket, thank you Charlie, you think, removing and starrng at it every night before going to bed in your four-bedroom house, you only want to experience our memory once more.

The cycle reapeats as the future becomes the past; into the future.

