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Amygdala

by Mari Syrad Grieves

I have this memory. I think I dream about it sometimes. But as the day draws on it slips from my dry hands like a minnow gasping for the river's ambitious current, and I forget I was ever trying to remember. I wake up again and the memory is as clear as the lens of a raindrop, heavy with water, balanced on a verdant leaf. I don't want to let it go but the uninterrupted rhythm of disremembering beats on.

I spend more and more of my time asleep; or when I can't, I'm engaged in activities designed to make me tired. Running, heavy drinking, sleeping pills I found online, fucking lavender. But nothing is enough. The memory has become an obsession. I wake and I write it down but when I look later on, the words dance across the page as though they are living hieroglyphs. I make a recording but the tape screeches and cracks, becoming harder to hear as the minutes of the day tick on. I can't hold on to the memory and my brain is a map I never learnt to read with a million contours, a million wrong turns to take as I search for the forgotten.

Then one day, I woke from the bliss of my dreams, and I didn't forget. Mid-morning came, lunchtime, dusk...I had it! Excitedly, I recounted the memory to a friend to keep it alive, I wrote it down a thousand times across the walls of my sunlit room. I stayed awake the whole day with no need for dream-chasing. This...this was bliss.

The next day, I woke calm and refreshed. Rubbing the sleep from my eyes, I lifted them to the walls. I could see the black ink scrawled across the sweet-pea wallpaper but I couldn't make out the words. Desperation filled my stomach with unease. I called my friend, begging her to tell me the story from my dream but as she spoke the sound, guttural and grotesque, gargled through the phone as I dropped it to the ground.

I don't know how long I've been chasing this dream I'm not sure was ever a memory. The obsession, I realise now, has robbed me of every memory I ever had.

I lie awake at night now, as though I used up my lifetime's allotted sleep, trying to remember the forgotten dream of a memory, trying to remember anything. But there is just blank space backlit by the sparks of my synapses trying to make sense of the emptiness of my memory.

I wish I could tell you about the dream, or if it ever was, the memory. I want you to know why it means everything to me, but I can't. My brain is hurt, my amygdala unformed and un-functioning, it can't hold on to anything that crosses its path, it just doesn't remember how.