

Noelle dipped her hand through his skull and pinched out a memory and held it up: a sphere the size of a large golden bouncy ball, inside of which a nightmarish scene played on repeat.

“Memory one,” she said, and then wailed it against the bedroom wall, where it smashed into golden points that twinkled in the evening light and then vanished.

“I really, *really* don’t know about this,” he said.

“You’ll be fine. Seriously, you will be. You’ve been haunted by all this your whole life.”

She slid her hand again into his head like someone searching underneath sea waves for seashells. Well, ugly seashells. She brought up her hand, and he felt a piece of his history plucked away.

“Memory two,” she said. He looked at the sphere in her fingers, at the scene inside it: the first time his father had taken him to the shed out back, and found the tire iron, and readjusted his spine.

She smashed the sphere against the wall. He felt himself changing, wires in his brain shifting...

“Without bad memories...” she shrugged.

She dipped again into his head, but this time something felt off. Her hand was in a place it shouldn’t be. He winced and jerked and bent forward. She told him to stay still, but she was going to kill something, he knew she was. Her hand was grasping for what he didn’t want gone.

She came up with a memory and held it high. He glanced at the sphere. She poised her arm to throw. He had just begun to tell her how she had grabbed every memory of her, how she’d reached into that portion of his brain where he’d kept all of her stashed so safe, including the first time they’d met, in a Jiffy Lube waiting room...

In that waiting room, she'd unlaced her sneaker and started a game of Cat's Cradle, and he'd gotten her a Sprite, and they'd sat there for a while until the mechanic said her name, and she'd paid and said goodbye to him and driven off. He'd watched her turn left out of the parking lot and realized he hadn't asked for her number.

He'd urged Jiffy Lube to hurry the fuck up, and finally he'd paid and driven in the direction she'd gone, feeling his chest tightening, banging the steering wheel, saying, "You idiot, you stalkerish idiot, she's gonna be so freaked out even if you do find her."

And then he'd seen her parked at a gas station. She'd been leaning back against her car, by the fuel cap, watching the price go up on the pump display.

He'd pulled into the empty spot next to her, then he'd gotten out of his car and smiled sheepishly. "I promise I normally don't follow people for like half a mile after I get my oil changed," he'd said, then talked some more. She'd returned the pump handle and put the fuel cap back on. He'd asked for her number.

Her phone had been dead, so she'd found a giant fat Sharpie in her glove compartment and wrote giant fat digits on his forearm, and then she'd found a red Sharpie and underlined the digits.

"I promise I don't normally turn people's arms into billboards for my phone number," she'd said, clicking the marker lid back on. "But there ya go..."

Back in his bedroom, he just started telling her to stop, when her arm rocketed forward and every memory of her smashed against the wall.