

TIRED OF FORGETTING

Amelia woke up, like every day, and prepared herself to go to work. She was a memory agent, checking people's memories for Cerebrum, the new government of the United States since the coup against the old democratic government they qualified as corrupted. She was heading for the centre of Sacramento, the new capital city, where the Cerebrum headquarters were. On the streets, the ad signs had given way to Cerebrum propaganda, promoting their product. "TIRED OF FORGETTING" was written next to a huge picture of a computer-like device named *memoria*. It was a device made for people to store memories and watch them whenever they wanted. What most people didn't know was that it was linked to the Cerebrum headquarters and that the memory agents had to secretly make sure people only had good memories. The bad ones were hidden, nobody was sad, or regretted anything; all signs of rebellion or deep-thinking were hidden too.

The new life there was not too different than before. People had less resources, were less rich; but no lack was felt, they were all happy. Amelia was on her way to the tallest building in the city, at the end of a long street. It was a white skyscraper with a gigantic logo of Cerebrum on it. As she entered the building, after greeting Marc, her best friend who worked at the reception desk, she made her way to the lift that led to her office. It was a sort of closet, with no windows, just a screen and a keyboard to work on. She saw a lot of persons' memories, nothing was interesting, she had nothing to hide.

After long hours of boring work, she passed to someone with a big file, which never happened because every month, memory agents watched, cleaned, and classified memories in the computer, in order to not waste time the next month. No matter what, she just started to check it, and concluded that it was the first time that someone looked after the man's memory. She looked at his name: Noah. As she was looking at his memories, she had the impression of seeing herself through the eyes of a familiar man. She recognised a birth mark on a little girl's cheek that looked like hers. She felt weird, she had never seen anyone, other than her, with that mark. But the more she was looking at it, the more the little girl was looking like herself. After she had checked the man's name one more time, she just decided to close the file and start over the next day, because it was the end of the day. But at home she was really obsessed with this birthmark. If the little girl in Noah's memories was her? But she couldn't remember if she knew this man or not. After a terrible night, she ran straight to her office and decided to take time to watch every single one of Noah's memories. After a few hours, lunch time came, and she decided to go ask questions to Noah, who was in the underground jail. She walked down a long and dark corridor, until she reached a big prison.

A big and threatening man was standing there, right in front of the door. She asked this guardian where Noah's cell was. Without pronouncing a word, he took her in front of it. Her heart started racing; she was now in front of a really tall man. He looked really tired and really dirty, with scratched clothes.

"Are you Noah?" Amelia whispered, "I need to ask you some questions."

Noah's eyes were wide open "Amelia??" he stammered. He jumped on his feet and came closer to see her better.

"Wait, do we know each other?" she asked.

“You don’t remember me?? Come on lil’ sister, stop playin’ with me!”

Amelia was really confused, she tried to search as hard as she could in her memory but nothing. She didn’t know this man.

“How? What did they tell you?” the man said, seated back on the cell bench.

“Can you develop a bit more sir, how is it possible that I’m your sister? I don’t even know my parents!” she said suspiciously.

Noah raised his eyebrows.

“You should probably take a chair; it might take you more time than you think…” he said with a deep voice.

Then the man started to tell her everything she had forgotten. It was like a shock for her, in a couple minutes she learned that the man was his big brother, and that he had to leave when he was only 13 years old when the government discovered the secret rebellion their father had started. Their parents were killed right in front of Amelia, Noah tried to save her, but the police kidnapped her. They must have erased all the memories, then brainwashed her to turn her into a perfect memory agent. The last 20 years were just lies and corruption.

“But why didn’t you try to save me, to make me escape from this theatre!?” she asked, still confused.

“I couldn’t, I was and still am actively searched by the police.” Noah whispered.

She stood up and walked away. She just came back to her office, as if nothing had happened. But she was still in shock because of what she learnt. How could Cerebrum do that to its citizens? She was questioning every action she had done in her career, the very meaning of her life; she had never thought of the effect hiding memories could have had on people. Cerebrum was supposed to help people in their daily lives. It was all lies; they were just trying to control every human being. As a result of being bathed in Cerebrum propaganda, she had come to believe that happiness was more important than free will or reflection. How could society have come to this? She needed to act, to repair the damage she had caused. How could she?

Going back to her office, she cleared Noah’s file, declaring his memory had been *corrected*. That way, she could meet him that night to join the Resistance. During their interview, he had told her that he would slip a card with the address of the meeting place under her mat each week. She knew the dangers of this plan, but she had to execute it for her parents, for her country.

At the end of her workday, Amelia went home and picked up the address. She walked and walked again - she was too poor to afford to pay for a car - and eventually ended up in a dilapidated factory. It was strange, she didn’t even know the city was that big. On every map, this place was just an empty field with nothing around. In there, she discovered a massive amount of technology: some kinds of computers, typing machines, printers, servers and so many cables. A dozen people were working there, including her brother.

“So, these are the rebels, we’re a team” he told her. “We’re working here to inform people about what’s happening in this country and to overthrow Cerebrum!”

The day after, Amelia asked to change her job to work at the reception desk, with Marc, to avoid causing more harm. For over a month, she was helping the Resistance, undercover, at night, each week in a new place to be sure they were not followed. But at one point, she felt like she was about to explode under the weight of all these secrets. She decided to talk to Marc and tell him everything. His reaction was rather encouraging, he seemed to want to know more and asked if he too could join the resistance. She accepted without hesitation and gave him the address of the meeting point. She didn't know yet if she had been right to do this, but she was confident, as he was her best friend.

Like every night, Amelia was heading for the meeting point. They worked for over an hour, but there was no sign of Marc, when suddenly the police arrived. They explained to the rebels that someone had given away their location.

“How is it possible?” a rebel exclaimed.

“We took all the precautions to avoid that situation!” another one said, surprised.

“Ask your friend Amelia!” a police officer retorted.

“Oh no! What have I done...” she said, remorseful.

“I knew we couldn't trust her!” a worker moaned.

“You'll solve your problems later! For now, let's just celebrate the end of the Resistance” the police officer boasted.

On their way to the headquarters, Amelia was so ashamed of what she had done she couldn't bear to look at any of the rebels. She was ready to do anything to save them. It was her fault after all!

At the end of the trip, a guard put what looked like a rubbish bag over her head. She could no longer see anything. She walked for a long time, got into the lift, and felt it go down. She knew where she was going, and she was not happy about it. After a long wait, someone took the bag off. She opened her eyes in a cell but, this one was weird. Usually, there was only a bed and a desk in it, but in that one, there was a *memoria* too.

“What's that?” she wondered.

“You'll find out soon enough!” the guard responded.

After what seemed like forever, a manager and her guards forced Amelia to wear the electrodes so they could use the machine to check her memories. She was reluctant but, how could she resist with all those weapons? She was overthinking, what were they going to do with her? Why was she not already dead? Was Noah fine? Why did they...

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Amelia woke up, she was standing with a lot of people in a ... cell? She had no memory and could not recall ever having known anything.

“Follow us!” the manager ordered her.

Amelia didn't know who she was but as she was dressed in a military outfit, she was not bold enough to bypass her order. She got into another jail cell, where a homeless-looking man greeted her.

“Amelia! You're alive! Thank God, I thought I lost you again! I was so worried for you...”

By the look she gave him, Noah understood she had been brainwashed. He tried to evoke memories in her but there was nothing to do. She was a blank sheet again. The manager ordered her to kill Noah. She didn't have any explanation, but she took the gun the woman gave her, pointed it at Noah and shot him.

She didn't know who he was, nor what she was doing there, but all she knew was that she was happy and felt she had done her duty.

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