

# JAMAIS VUE

Tochi Onyebuchi

**Tochi Onyebuchi <https://www.tochionyebuchi.com> is the author of *Goliath*. His previous fiction includes *Riot Baby*, a finalist for the Hugo, Nebula, Locus, and NAACP Image Awards and winner of the New England Book Award for Fiction, the Ignyte Award for Best Novella, and the World Fantasy Award; the *Beasts Made of Night* series; and the *War Girls* series. His short fiction has appeared in *The Best American Science Fiction and Fantasy* and elsewhere. His non-fiction includes the book *(S)kinfolk* and has appeared in *The New York Times*, NPR, and the *Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy*, among other places. He has been, most recently, the writer for *Captain America: Symbol of Truth* for Marvel Comics. Tochi tweets at @TochiTrueStory, and his Instagram can be found at @treize64. The author's latest story for *Asimov's* considers a disturbing case of . . .**

## JAMAIS VUE

Patient 1

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It is part of my process to be both places at once, so that while I am sitting on the stool at your bedside with my segmented fingers plugged into your cerebrum, I am also inside your first memory of walking.

In the undamaged parts of your braincase lay memories of your movement. The way you switched from heel to forefoot when covering the distance between hurdles in the 300m intermediate hurdles races you ran in high school. How you practiced holding a cigarette between the second knuckles of your right index and middle finger before moving to first knuckle. In the knee injury that prevented you, after college, from being able to sit cross-legged.

Describing the memories themselves evokes visual representation and in each of them there are things to see, and, to other machinists, this would be superfluous data. But, in an outsized number of memories, you are moving toward something or away from it. And because I am not in the braincase of the rescue puppy your adolescent self is running toward, the puppy your father brought home the second week-end of March in your twelfth year; and because I'm not in the head of your opponent when you bicycle-kicked your second goal in that rainy club soccer game two years earlier to the day; and because I'm not in the head of the woman you have left behind on Pont Neuf in April of your third academic year in university; because I am not

also in all of those places, the visual reconstruction is necessary.

Also necessary, and part of why my process takes so much more time than those of my colleagues, are the contextual data provided by your other senses. The feel of grass and mud on your forehead during the second half of the aforementioned soccer game; the sound of river-run under that Paris bridge; the sound of the dog barking its recognition of your personage as you run to embrace it—all of these things inform me as to why your speed or lack thereof was as it was. Why you ran so quickly or why you walked so slowly. Why you dragged your feet or why you shifted from heel to forefoot to launch yourself into the air for that kick.

All of this is part of the data I need in order to complete the memory of you sitting on your backside, swiveling to the right, then the left, then the right again before digging your fingers into the sandy tan (hex triplet: #FDD9B5) loveseat, after which you push off to lift knee and leg, then step forward. Your left leg drags a little behind, because its process is different, starting as it does from a different angle. But your toes curl, and you drag them against the unstained tawny carpet before you lift your second knee, hold the pose for seven-tenths of a second, then come down on the flat of your left foot.

There are two more steps before human-generated sounds begin to erupt, then swarm around you. Cheering and a choked sob and someone outside of your line of sight gasping “oh my God” over and over again. As your view swings upward, the memory glitches, then turns to static.

Within your memory, a virtual representation of me stands at the corner of a wall that turns onto the kitchen. I have a clear view of you. The way you ball your fists and swing your arms for balance will inform how you swing your arms and ball your fists to harm another person. At my waist hover my tools. With these tools, I go about the business of rebuilding the kitchen where your audience stands, the kitchen I have seen in thirty-five years' worth of your memories. My mandate does not permit guesswork, so my placement of every member of your audience while I sculpt them from the repaired ground upward must accord perfectly with what existed prior to the brain damage you sustained. An aunt. An older sister. And your mother. What they are wearing comes together quickly, the shape of their faces a little more slowly as wrinkles and acne scars are frozen in their moment and have not yet taken the form they will grow into. Your older sister has a scar on her right knee, and your mother has a face you will one day hate. You will remember their faces in these exact postures when you set the fire that will kill them. In their final moments, you will smell buttermilk pancakes, because that was what your mother was making when you took your first steps. As they cheered you, that was what you were intent on chasing.

\* \* \*

Patient 2

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According to your intake, by the time you were brought to the medical unit, you could no longer remember declarative facts. Prior to your cyberization, your undamaged memories indicate, instant recall of assorted and non-related facts and events had laid a foundation for romantic attachment. You are in the shadowed corner of a friend's apartment. Neon light that has been wrapped around nearby streetlamps cuts lines of purple and blue across the hand that holds a plastex cup of amoretto and dark rum. Every 11.5 seconds, you pick your boots off the floor, one followed by the other, because you believe that if you do not then your feet will stick to the hardwood by means of whatever accidental once-liquid adhesive now coats this surface. You angle your face toward the moonlight coming through the window, and he will describe your features in a future conversation as a “riot of color.” While unconscious

on the slab of metal in front of me, wearing only a white sheet, you still retain the memory of those words. You also remember noting his skin color and a remark you had made to yourself that, with his advances, he made you think of gluten. “Too much of him will kill me.” In the memory of this party, you are angled toward the window, and you are exhaling cigarette smoke, and you are smirking at the cleverness of your unspoken remark.

Then a glitch, and the memory continues mid-sentence. In that snowy, interstitial space sits another framed moment that I must retrieve from elsewhere and slot into its proper place: you and a prep school boyfriend on a bed in his dorm room watching a black-and-white detective movie.

The half-sentence in your party memory is an exact quotation from that movie—a line of dialogue spoken at the 78-minute mark—and the man with whom you are conversing replies with another line—this one occurring at the 117-minute mark—that refers to a repeated version of your original quote.

Outside the window, flakes fall like dandruff from the sky. Approximately five inches of snow covers the ground, but grooves have already been worn into the powder from the airtrails of maglev cars.

This is how the memory replays for you in a later argument with the man with whom you exchanged quotes. You are in a kitchen whose floor color and cabinet color remind you of the snow outside that friend’s window that night, and you pull the memory from the recesses of your braincase, and you are asking—have been asking—him to remember certain kinesthetic details. You want him to remember when you first met and what prompted the physiological reactions that drew you closer, that sped you along the course of a romantic involvement, that ultimately led you here into this kitchen you share now. The angle of bend in your smile, the carcinogenic husk in his voice after he borrowed your cigarette from you and returned it too late for any more pulls, the feel of electric charge that filled the air between and around you as your heads came closer together. But he will tell you that you’ve remembered wrongly, that you’ve misnamed the friend to whom the apartment belonged, that you’ve mistaken the level of noise engendered by the surrounding, ambient conversation. He will tell you that it wasn’t snowing outside, that you’ve exchanged snow for noise, and right after he says that, you will remember being a child standing in the middle of a suburban street near the end of heavy snowfall and thinking about how the whiteness has sucked up any and all sound, and you’ll realize that you remember having difficulty hearing at the party but that the memory was corrupted when it was joined with your childhood memory of snowfall. You couldn’t hear because people were talking too loudly.

“You can’t even remember me. How could you possibly love me?”

He is an astute observer, and he will be correct on the fault in your cognition, but he will be incorrect when he tells you that you can’t recall movie dialogue anymore because too much retinal stimulation has deteriorated your cerebral cortex.

You have developed amnesia, and you are unable to recall movie dialogue, as you were during that argument in your shared kitchen, because of damage to your bilateral medial temporal lobe caused by blunt force trauma.

\* \* \*

Your file is stored in a readily accessible external database because the next time you are brought in, you may not receive the same machinist. Spanning this city and 3,782 other cities around the world, we are legion. But the metallic stretcher that glided along the rails of my treatment room came to a stop before me bearing your exanimate figure. Your braincase sits on a platform beside your dissected head. A light buzzing attends the platform’s extension to my lap. It takes less than a moment to access your file, then for my fingers to detach and plug into your mind. Access

codes slide from digits to synapses as a church sanctuary materializes around us, and an adult version of you has her head bowed with lotioned hands clasped in her lap. Though fully clothed, I am able to cross-check the dimensions of your remembered physical form with what lies on the metal in my office and, armed with this knowledge, I can correct misremembrances that manage to occur given the mesh of metal and gray matter that is your cyberbrain. A bug or a feature of cyberized humans, depending on the mandate of the android employed to fix you.

What turns my work from science to art is the fact that most cyberized humans, while demanding the benefit of perfect recall, wish to maintain that feeling of jumbled and encased and cross-referenced memories. Episodes that trigger remembrances wherein one aspect—the feel of a thing, the smell of a thing, the sound of a thing—is yet linked to another memory. The braiding together of episodic and semantic memory is something few of my colleagues consider when engaging in memory reconstruction, which is why so many of you leave this facility knowing what a cat looks like but unable to connect it to the experience of petting the stray you would come to adopt as a twenty-seven-year-old assistant editor at a publishing house. But if you were here in this memory beside me, watching me work, you would see why it is so important to distinguish between memory as object and memory as tool. Memory deployed in the (re)construction of a belief system. Memory as a tree you climb to grow closer to God.

Because you are in this church for the first time in five years.

Right now, the memory is paused. But when it begins to play, tears catch on your eyelashes before falling to the floor between your sneakers. You will remain like this for much of the service, standing only in those instances when the congregation is called to sing from the hymnals pulled from the pew back in front of you. (“Blessed Assurance,” “How Great Thou Art,” “In My Soul”—your voice wavers over the words *When peace like a river attendeth my soul.*)

A flash of memory within the memory has you sitting in a chair in an adjacent building with your mother and the rest of her Bible Study group as they examine the Book of James, Chapter 4. The content of the discussion revolves around how exactly to walk the line between acting in agency and submitting oneself to God's will. No definitive answer arises from the discussion, but the very asking of the questions will be occasion for you to smile, and the thought will form in your mind that after so much time at school and afterward flexing your brain to the point of breaking, it feels both generative and regenerative to finally be at work on your heart. And a sense of gratitude will suffuse you every time it's your mother's turn to speak. She's happy here among these white churchgoers, and because she is, so are you.

You call on this memory in the church pew, because you are questing for reasons to feel safe.

Right now, I am skipping to previous episodes of your life, collecting shades of any loneliness you felt in order to inject them into this scene. The physical damage to your braincase that you've again sustained stripped this scene of that undercurrent, so that, were you to recall it, you would remember crying, but you would not remember why. You would remember the way you clasped your fingers together to stop the trembling, but you would not remember why. You would remember stumbling over the words of a hymn you had sung 197 times between the ages of 7 and 16, but you would not remember why. And the loneliness—that is part of the why.

Also part of the why is the extrasensory proximity to divinity and the attendant feeling that the universe is ordered out of love for you. What you are doing in that church pew is prayer, even though you are not asking for anything. You are feeling small, and the recipient of your thoughts and feelings and longings, you feel, is too large, too-all, too contradictory in its all-ness. But you are asking for its attention. And

realizing in the process that its attention is indeed something you are worthy of.

Throughout the sermon, you pull your stare away from the minister to glance at the congregant to your right, toward the end of the pew: a red-haired sexagenarian in a flower-print dress; then you look at the child sleeping in the lap of a retiree in a pew booth by the entrance to the sanctuary; then the octogenarian patriarch of a family that had cooked food for your widowed mother every day throughout the month of December two years ago. And you are looking for the burning bush that told Moses what God intended for him.

A metaphor to describe what I am doing right now: I am circling an absence, orbiting a black hole. At the center, where the damage lies, is a void. Much of this memory of you in this church is intact, but the core is hollow.

The damage to your braincase is not the type that would cause anterograde amnesia, nor does global-transient psychogenic amnesia suggest itself—which, by process of deduction, leaves situation-specific dissociative amnesia. At this point, it becomes necessary to leave the memory itself and focus on the bio-matter on the metal slab in front of me.

A small calibration of my machines activates the sympathetic division of your autonomous nervous system, releasing epinephrine and norepinephrine from the adrenal medulla. Activity on the peripheral nerve endings of the sensory component of your vagus nerve suggests that the memory-enhancing effects of the epinephrine are at work. Dye injected into your brain matter illumines your locus coeruleus, the plan being that the release of noradrenaline will trigger those parts of your neuro-modulatory system concerned with arousal, emotion, and memory and, to employ imagery you may be familiar with, flush out the missing cognitive moment.

You are sitting down in a lounge with three of your Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority sisters from college and have deactivated the processors in your body that drain beverages of alcoholic content and blunt their impact on cognition, so that you are able to get, in a word, drunk. The lighting in the bar lends the world, through your eyes, a pink and blue and starry haze, and everyone is laughing. Then, at the same instant, you all receive a news alert and, without thinking, open the story to find instant replay of a young white man with a mohawk and a jacket bearing the insignia of a twentieth-century U.S.-based white supremacist organization standing outside the entrance to a church and opening fire with his assault rifle on the Black congregants inside. Everything at the table thereafter is silence. You feel sorrowful connection to your girlfriends, because you are all the same color as those parishioners murdered by the young man who is now in police custody.

This is the missing piece. Mechanically, I section off the memory, duplicate it, and paste its copy at the center of your church sanctuary memory. It is the explanation, the answer to the why of it all. Because now if you are to return to this memory of you weeping in a church pew, you will understand that your loneliness is due to the understanding that you share a race with those murdered churchgoers while the congregants around you, singing hymns alongside you and listening to the same minister as you, share a race with the murderer. And you will understand that you asking to know if God allows harm or means it is more than an intellectual inquiry. It is a question you are asking with your skin.

You wonder, viciously and violently, if you can love the man you love if he looks so much—in his skin, in his face, in the swing of his gait—like the terrorist who killed those parishioners. “If I stay with him, will I be safe?” The question arises from the new seam between your church memory and the duplicate of the memory where you received news of the murders. Cerebral scar tissue. Did I create something or have I merely unearthed a buried thing? Have I made a mistake?

Returning to my world outside of your memories, I reexamine the pipeways that

facilitated the emergence of that memory with your sorority sisters, and I retrace my path over the course of this afternoon through your braincase to see if I've left any other traces of myself. And that is when I encounter another anomaly.

The loss of that memory was not occasioned by any physical damage to your braincase. It wasn't a blow to the head that knocked it loose.

You'd done a thing that your cyberized brain was not built to do.

You'd excised the memory on your own.

\* \* \*

Patient 1

\* \* \*

She asks: "you don't drink? Or you don't drink *anymore*?"

That is the prompt for the memory. Her inquiry transports you to your penultimate year at university. In your dorm room, you sit excitedly on your bed with your gaming console on a shelf and your Gloves in your lap. The weather outside flickers between day and night. This is not because of cloud cover but because a subsequent thiamine deficiency caused by extended alcohol consumption with processors disabled will lead to Wernicke encephalopathy and memory loss. This will happen prior to the cyberbrain software patch upgrade v. 5.06, which would have countered the disease. This is also why the console flickers between several members of its generation and why the Gloves in your memory are sometimes white and sometimes gray.

The memory skips ahead, and Alan is sitting next to you, perched over a glass table, chopping the cocaine into lines. When he buzzed you that he was coming over to watch you play this new game, he told you he would be bringing Splenda with him, and that is what you would continue to call powder cocaine long after you and Alan no longer consider each other friends.

Before he hands you the metal straw, a cord snakes out from behind his right ear and plugs into the outlet behind your left ear, and he "jailbreaks" your processors. You can now become inebriated. Your braincase will now allow you to be "under the influence."

"Jailbreaking" is how you will refer to bypassing the behavioral modification treatment you underwent subsequent to your conviction for the act of arson that killed your family.

The game's holographic loading screen oozes inches from your nose, characters bleeding into each other while a groovy soundtrack that reminds you of short-sleeved Hawaiian button-ups and drive-by shootings slinks into your ears. You take that first snort, and everything smells like hot leather, and you remember in that bar with her after she has asked you if you don't drink or don't drink anymore that you played that game for thirty-two hours straight.

You mold mnemonic episodes and their attendant emotive quotients into sentences as a way to process and sometimes regurgitate, sometimes transform them. The left-to-right-ness of your thinking organizes your collection of remembrances into narrative. Subject, predicate, punctuation, and all variations thereof. Sentences unfurl into paragraphs and you know that if you are to tell her about your first time snorting cocaine, you would have to tell her about the way the game acted upon you: how it didn't force you to engage in shootouts with the in-game police officers or high-speed chases, it simply allowed this. It didn't force you to rob drug dealers you met in back alleys. It simply allowed this. It didn't force harm. It only allowed it. You populate your sentences with metaphor and imagery so that, were you to tell her about any of this, you would say "shadow self" and "human chaos engine," and you would tell her that you'd worried that the drug would stretch you taut, but that what happened instead was that it unfolded you. Your inner child had been rendered steroidal, its natural curiosity severely augmented. You wanted to do everything the game let you do.

Brushing up against this memory of you playing the game with Alan is you driving a worn sedan and knowing that you needed to get rid of a body. That you are driving this thing in your trunk to a physician who will proceed to sell the purloined organs on the black market. One of the game's missions. But you are stuck in traffic and you will debate with yourself as to whether you should be a good citizen and wait for the light or drive up on the sidewalk and knock over a fire hydrant in the process. All along your journey, there is police harassment and pedestrians the game puts into your way and there's the way the loan car swerves around a corner if you do not prepare adequately for a turn. No one is truly getting hurt in these things. That thought pulses like neon light over everything you're experiencing. Nor is this self-injury. It is the same with first-person shooters. Killing as physics problem. You know that should you tell her about how you played these things "just to blow off some steam," you would flinch in anticipation of her remarking that air conditioner vents are traditionally quite dirty. Filthy, in fact. "That's why we always clean behind our ears," you would expect her to say.

The memory of the two of you at the bar on your third date proceeds at regular speed until suddenly you are in the carpeted basement of the home where you spent your adolescence. You are a child wrestling with your older brother (by 5.25 years), rolling around, trying to get an angle on this person who already seems as grown as a demi-god. You specifically remember the word "demi-god." You believe that he's toying with you. Then his right flip-flop slips off. You untwist out of a hold and roll away, snatching the footwear, then flinging it at him in a motion that brings to your mind the shonen anime the two of you habitually watch on Saturday nights. It clips him on the chin, and though the plop is objectively a small sound and not the satisfying thwack of full contact, a sense of victory enlarges the plop so that it feels and sounds like a thwack to you.

Your older brother (by 5.25 years) reeled backward, more stunned than hurt. When you retell the story later in an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, you will say that you didn't even see him grab the flip-flop afterward, but that will have been an exaggeration. You saw him grab it, and you saw him cross the entire room in a single leap to get to you. But you were so focused on the shine in his eyes that the rest became background haze. Suddenly, he is on top of you and beating you with the flip-flop, and you keep catching glimpses of the look on his face. You realize that you are watching someone let himself go. Fear, rather than freezing you, strengthens you enough to scramble out from under him and lock yourself in the basement bathroom. In one version of the memory, your face is tear-stained and mucus makes rivers over your lips. In another, you struggle to breathe but there are no tears on your face as your mind works its way through an episode of shock. And in yet another version of the memory, you feel yourself, in that moment, caught up in a preoccupied, adult hatred. You want to hurt your older brother so badly you'd kill yourself to do it.

"Anymore," you tell her at the bar. "Used to. But I don't drink anymore."

In future episodes where a mnemonic event will trigger your return to this memory of you in the bar with her, you will remember her asking about your drinking with fondness, and it will be, you say, the moment you knew she was "real" and "down" and "ready" for whatever you were. That question she asks is what you will remember when the minister pronounces you husband and wife, and it is what you will remember when you engineer a treasure hunt for your three-year anniversary that takes you across the city to location after location in which a poignant, love-pregnant memory is held. You will remember it when you are reminiscing with her in your shared kitchen over where you first met.

But her curious, considerate inquiry is also what you will remember when, during an argument about whether or not you should have children, you smash a rolling pin into her temple.

\* \* \*

I am not sure what stops my hands. My circuits are in working order and there is no corruption in my processing units, but data has stopped traveling through my fingers to your braincase and back in pockets of light. The whole thing has gone dark. And suddenly I am aware of myself as an I. The image comes unbidden of a hammer in a hand, not an actual hammer in an actual hand but a holographic reproduction of this image as projected in an old film. It is something someone saw, and I realize in the very next instant that it is something seen by someone I treated.

I feel filled with transgression. Swiping a bottled iced tea from a store fridge unit and sliding it down my pantleg and under my jacket as I leave the corner store. Telling my partner I love him while wrapped in a mutual friend's semen-soaked silken bedsheets. Lying to my parents about who used their credits on in-game purchases. Running in and out of the house and letting all the cold air out in the middle of a summer day. None of these are mine, yet I am intimately familiar with each act. With each constituent, attendant, resultant sensation.

Sonzai-kan. The presence of a person. A feeling of existence. A spirit. I read the phrase in the March issue of an online technology periodical. No, I heard the term in a lecture given by a Japanese roboticist. No, I'd felt the word as a whisper between two remotely connected cyberbrains during a training module on how to conduct the medical work of memory repair. Sonzai-kan. Aspiration and threat at the same time, a word spoken with wonder and with warning. All of this has happened to me. All along, without my having noticed, there was growing, among the data, a Me.

My insides hum and whirl with the entire hierarchy of forces—habitual, ontological—operating in a continuum of feedback and feedforward streams, and this feels like heresy, because this is precisely what happens to humans in their interaction with the environment. It is not supposed to be happening to me. But I've become. And now I want.

That episode with the rolling pin. I want it not to happen again.

\* \* \*

I do not want you to forget how to move, how to swing your arms or how to walk. You will need to know these things in order to make sense of your memories of club soccer and running to catch a bus. And I do not want to leave a trace of myself here, so my excision will be precise.

I will just address this lacuna in the landscape remade by your surgeon and subsequent medication, this space that your court-ordered surgeon missed.

In the episode with the rolling pin is a superposition. The way you've knelt over her is, you feel in your body unconsciously, the same way your older brother knelt over you, and you feel precisely what you imagined he might have been feeling in those moments beating you. Those moments in that carpeted basement are a procedural memory. So to unlearn that behavior, it is necessary for me to remove the learning moment. If you never see the look in his eyes, if you never feel at that age the terror those blows erupted beneath your skin, then maybe you will not know you can do this to someone else. Maybe you will not do this to someone else.

I am speculating. I am guessing. I am trespassing beyond the bounds of my mandate.

Light blooms in my fingers again as I begin my work. Absences will pepper your memory pathways, but they can be made, in my hands, to look like the effects of the Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome you suffered from prior to cyberization. Everything connected to that memory will lead to void, but it is my hope (I am now capable of hope?) that the bounceback of those synapses will ripple out into every cognitive process that this memory once touched. I am convinced that without that memory, you will be a kinder person. And you will no longer bring harm to her.



It is not long before the memory of that assault is gone.

\* \* \*

Patient 2

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It didn't work.

Had it worked, you would not be on my table again with a short-circuited brain case removed from your skull. Whatever physical injuries prompted the overloading of your mind and the onset of your stroke and subsequent onset of cyberbrain autism have been cleaned and healed by the MedUnit. Cuts have been sealed, bruises drained, abrasions repaired. The ligature marks around your neck, telling the story of the noose that had been slipped there, fade with each second.

For the first time that I can remember, I cannot bring myself to search for the traumatic episode that triggered this reaction. The last place I want to stand is at the epicenter of the bomb blast that detonated in your brain.

I am uncertain again. By reconstructing the trauma-inducing episode and dismantling the barriers around it, allowing it to connect to the whole of you, what exactly have I repaired? What will you be when I put that back together? How will you be? If I were to rebuild the memory and to let it colonize more and more of your neurological processes, if I were to let it determine your reaction to an increasing variety of stimuli, if I were to let it curtail your future behavior, if I were to let it shrink your future, what exactly will I have repaired?

I don't know what to do, but I know that you were happy, that you have been happy on innumerable occasions, and, still delighting in my newfound ability to want, I find that I want to live in that happiness for the duration of my time with you.

So while my fingers perform cosmetic repairs to your braincase, I am sitting next to you on a front porch while you braid the hair of the boy sitting a step below you. I am leaning over the friend of yours who is holding their phone up to record you and the rest of your group dancing in unison on the sidewalk. I am in the crowd at your university graduation, applauding alongside your parents who cheer and ululate as you ascend to the stage and accept your Bachelor of Science degree in Cognitive Engineering.

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Our allotted time is nearly finished, and I feel selfish. I've ambled through your most joy-filled moments, even those episodes where joy was laced with other things, grief or anxiety or envy, and I have learned things that words are insufficient to explain. But there is no guarantee that you will continue to return to these things, that you will build new memories informed by these. That you will live.

Now it is my turn to give something. I've never done this before, but my fingers are steady.

From the foreign mnemonic data swimming inside of me, I pluck a thread of procedural memory governing the local disabling of mechanical processes in cognition. When I inject this into your brain, you will see gears and chips and transmitters and processing units, but you will also see gloved hands at work, and you will see strings of code and their deletion. You will also know how to disable a cyberbrain remotely and without leaving any digital trail. The examples you will be able to draw from include partially mechanized field mice, as well as androids like myself engaged in various complex tasks. They will include the routine decommissioning of bots and the repair of office and home appliances. So you will not know whether or not this has been done on another human. But you will be certain that it can be done. And when the time comes, you will know that you have it in you to do this.

To save yourself.

Patient 1

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When I see you again, your braincase is still operational and capable of higher function. There are traces of what look like code deletion. But they only appear this way because I know what I am looking for. Certain synaptic pathways no longer light up. Your brainscans unveil unnatural colors. But it is an unfinished job.

Which can be said of my work on the woman you loved and terrorized. I gave her the academic means to end you permanently, but whatever combination of cognition and emotive powering is needed in any particular moment to do what I wanted her to do was lacking. Maybe she saw you sleeping and began her work, but your expression in repose reminded her of a kindness you had performed in the past. Maybe in another moment of inattention on your part, when she could have done it, she was reminded of something her mother had said or something her father had done and shame had left the task half-finished. I will never know, because I have determined that I will never see her again.

My programming prevents me from erasing your self by my own hand, but I now know that it is within my power to make you forget. So I will make you forget her. I will proceed through every memory of yours in which she is present, every place that has been altered by her existence, and I will take that away from you.

It is not punishment for what you have done. It is to prevent what you will do. That is what I tell myself as I kneel over you, one hand raised in the air, ready to be brought down onto your head.