

1.2 Broken Memories

1.2.1

"I'd rather kill you!" she shouted and pushed him away.

*He did not **expect** it and almost fell.*

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw the cliff and quickly reached for her. His foot slipped on the leaves. She caught him and rolled her eyes.

*It was clear that **she was worried**. About him? Because she almost pushed him off the cliff? Because she almost killed him?*

And why did she want to do that?

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He woke up sweating. It took him a while to understand where he was.

Was it a dream, or did he finally remember something?

He tried to replay the **fragile** moment again and again to keep it.

Like other dreams, it would disappear after a while, leaving only the feeling.

He did not care about feelings. He needed facts.

If it was not just a dream, but a buried memory, he needed to keep it.

True or False?

- a) He clearly recognized the scared eyes he saw.
- b) The brunette came to him because she was interested in French poetry.

1.2.2

He could not see her face. He did not know who she was. All he saw were those scared eyes. But he did not recognize them.

It could have been a dream, or it could have been a real memory.

Maybe his mind was rejecting it because something terrible had happened. Something he did not want to remember.

Maybe someone who loved him hurt him. Someone who loved him until a certain point. Until something happened that made her scream, "I'd rather kill you!".

That is what people say in anger, in **defense** when someone hurts them.

He **must have done** or said something bad. But to whom? And what was it? The memory **was gone**.

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He did not notice that the brunette who loved everything French was flirting with him again. She came to him for French poetry books. She studied it.

She was delicate, and he liked to flirt. Maybe one day it would turn into something, and next time he locked up at seven o'clock, he would not stay alone. He would take her by her sleeve and bring her to his room.

But you cannot bring a princess like her to a place like that. Not today.

He **barely** noticed her. He had not slept since three o'clock last night. He had not fallen back asleep since that horrible memory woke him up. He **kept thinking** about it, trying to find more memories, to remember that face. But nothing came.

Except for the feeling that it was *not* just a dream. He remembered! It really happened.

LEARNING TIP

defence (UK spelling, in US it would be "defense")

1.2.3

"It's possible you have started to remember the circumstances of your accident. It is possible, but don't get carried away. This **could have happened** at any time. An argument on a walk. I'm sure it was a scary moment, but it may have nothing to do with the accident. They did not find you in the **ravine**. You did not have broken bones or scratches. Just a cut on your head. But it's great if you finally remember something."

Dana. Of course, she was right. It **could have been** any time. But it **must have been** the lost year in Czechia.

Some details of his life in Australia **were gone** too. But if it had happened there, the person **would not have spoken** Czech. Unless he had a fight like that with his mother. But he doubted it.

The **Crochet** princess **must have been** offended. He did not fall for her flirting. Too bad if she would not come back. It was promising.

He was aware of his age, but he did not look it. He looked younger, and he also felt younger. Maybe it was because he had forgotten so much.

He was shy with women sometimes, especially the college girls who came in and flirted with him. They were book lovers who found the tall, slender, blonde man sexy. He knew a lot about books, and he realized he was good at flirting with them too.

Since when? He did not remember being a playboy. On the other hand, he did not remember many things.

LEARNING TIP

fight – tady ve významu hádka (neznamená to vždy "boj")

crochet/ing – háčkování (Crochet princess – háčkovaná princezna)

1.2.4

Every birthday, he **treated himself to** one of them. They were very young. And he was turning forty–five this year. In two months.

His Crochet princess could be charmed **by him by then**. Maybe she would not even notice the mess. Or could he just sleep with her in the bookshop?

There was a little corner with a rug and cushions to lie on and read books. He did not mind when people came in to read without buying. He did not need to sell. He liked books and he liked people who appreciated books.

He would have to try harder to make sure he was not alone on his birthday this year.

He wasn't sentimental. He was thinking about sex. That was his "cake and candles".

He would have to try harder if the Crochet princess ever came back.

But today, he did not have the energy or the mood for her. He kept thinking about the dream. The **nightmare**.

He wanted to remember, but he was starting to worry about what he could find out.

LEARNING TIP

nightmare – noční můra

by him – 7. pád kým čím = jím okouzlena

by then – do té doby

1.2.5

"I don't want to scare you, but memories can be tricky. It **could have been** the **other way around**. You **could have pushed** her. You saw the scared eyes. Maybe she was afraid that she would fall. She stretched her hand out to you. You saw the deep ravine, and your foot slipped. Please be careful before you make conclusions."

Dana. She was right, of course.

"I hope you don't think that I tried to throw her off. Or that I pushed her or wanted to kill her! *She* said she would kill *me*," he argued weakly.

"Maybe she pushed you in anger. But you're stronger. Maybe you pushed her, too. Until you know more, don't be too quick to judge. Also, maybe it didn't mean anything. Just a **fight** and a moment of fear in the dangerous terrain. You were found up there, not down in the ravine. They didn't find anyone else, so you didn't kill anyone. This **could have happened** at any time."

The following night, he slept through. In the evening, he was exhausted, and no dream or memory woke him up.

He understood that he had started to remember, but he also understood Dana's point that it could be a memory of *anything*. He would wait to see if the picture would start to come together. It looked promising.

Things looked good with the Crochet princess, too. She was standing outside the shop when he opened it at eleven. He opened the door and smiled at her.

Everybody can have a bad day. He just had one yesterday. Today, he was charming again. At least he hoped so.

After all, she was in her early twenties, and he was almost forty-five.

True or False?

- c) Dana reminded him that he had been found in the ravine with broken bones.
- d) He sometimes felt shy with the college girls who flirted with him.

1.2.6

She said she had left something there yesterday. James thought, "Yeah, okay – **good excuse**, come in."

She went straight to the carpet corner. Oh no, it's eleven, I am opening the shop right now! He was worried for a moment that she would start **seducing** him.

She bent down and picked up her sunglasses from the rug. This reminded him that he should clean the place. He had not done it for a week, and who knows what was lying around.

"Thanks. I **gotta** go." She said.

For a second, she hesitated, as if she wanted to kiss him on the cheek like her beloved Frenchmen do. But she was probably discouraged by the fact that he was much taller, and she would have to pull him close.

He had solved this height problem before. He would place her on the right step, or a piece of furniture. He knew how to do that. If she had turned around on the second step, she would see that he was just behind her at the right height. For a kiss.

But she did not turn around, and she was gone. He **should have written** that down. He had been so focused on that strange memory that he forgot to write down how upset she was when she left yesterday.

And today he had to write down that she came back in the morning for her sunglasses. He never wanted to forget anything again. It was a terrible feeling.

If he had kept his journal even before the accident, he could now read notes in his own handwriting. He would not have to **wonder** if it was true or just an illusion.

LEARNING TIP

good excuse – dobrá výmluva

gotta – americký hovorový výraz pro "muset"

to wonder – má více významů, zde znamená "tápat, uvažovat, přemýšlet jestli"

1.2.7

Most of his days were very boring. There was nothing to write down. He was happy about that. If nothing happened, there was nothing to remember. And nothing to forget.

But what if *all* his days were this empty, even in that first year before the accident? It was the only thing that made sense.

Nothing was happening. He had no close friends. He was learning Czech and flirting with girls.

He went out alone, to tourist pubs where no one could remember him now.

Maybe he went there to meet somebody speaking English. After all, Czech was still a foreign language to him, and it was hard to speak.

Maybe he wanted it that way. He spent day after day in his basement, where the sun never shines, lost in books that he had never cared for before.

He knew that he had worked in a bank in Australia. But when he came to Prague, **he felt at home**. He realized that he would probably never return to Australia. He would stay here, where his roots were, even though all his family was deceased.

He had no one, and he was alone in the whole world.

And now he knew how truly alone he was.

True or False?

- e) When the girl picked up her sunglasses from the rug, James was reminded that he should finally clean the place.
- f) Most of his days were exciting and full of important events to remember.

1.2.8

At that time, which he couldn't remember, he probably had an argument with a woman somewhere in the countryside. And maybe they did not see each other after that, so she never looked for him.

The bad thing was that his phone was not found after the accident, so he had nothing to start with. He **could have checked** his contact list, called people, and found out something.

And even if he did not save contacts because he liked to memorize numbers, he could check the call history or read the text messages. But without the phone, and in a foreign country, without a family, he was completely cut off.

They sent him home from the hospital with a report in the name of James Column. That was all he knew about himself.

He was found near a car which he had rented from an agency with his passport. The car was not crashed, but everything of value **was gone**. His ID, passport, and driver's license were missing. And his money, if he had any, was also gone.

The police asked the car rental agency to find out who rented the car, and this gave him his identity. He remembered the antique bookshop and knew where he lived. His keys were in his pocket.

So **off he went**. Half of his head was shaved, with a long scar on his white skull, but physically – he was just fine.

LEARNING TIP

Minulý kondicionál:

could have done, would have done, might have done = vnímej to v češtině jako "mohl udělat, udělal by"; jen si všimni té konstrukce, která neznamená nic jiného, než jeden z gramatických časů v minulosti;

Přítomný kondicionál:

could do, would do, might do = v přítomnosti

1.2.9

He needed to get a new passport and go to the police for a report, **though** he had nothing to tell them.

"I don't even know that I was going somewhere, **let alone** where or with whom. Then they found me with **my head busted**, and when I woke up, I didn't remember anything."

The police officer seemed to be **suspicious**. In the end, he gave James a business card with the name Dana Vítová, PhD, saying that the psychotherapist could help him remember. Then they could complete the report and continue the investigation.

He called Dr. Vítová, but after five long years, nothing was revealed. Except for her firm breasts, which he kept staring at during their sessions. They hypnotized him. One day, he leaned over from the therapy couch and put his hands on her knees. She did not move and stared at him, surprised. Maybe she was wondering whether to hit him or not. Maybe she was worried about how he could react. After all, he was a psycho who didn't know what had happened to him.

And **neither did she**. She had no idea what he had done in the past and what to expect from him. Him unbuttoning her blouse was probably the last thing she expected. And with that, the psychoanalysis ended.

They have spoken little since. Instead, they were doing something much more satisfying, something that gave them both pleasure every time. No talking about the past, which had probably disappeared **for good**.

Until yesterday. Yesterday, something began to come back.

LEARNING TIP

let alone – natož

for good – nadobro, navždy

1.2.10

The old–fashioned doorbell jingled. This old brass bell announced and welcomed every customer.

James looked up from the counter. The light was bright outside, so he could only see a silhouette, but he recognized her immediately. The unsteady, hesitant walk. She carefully went down step by step, holding the railing.

The bookstore was full of bookshelves which created a narrow corridor, almost twenty meters long, through the whole shop. The **checkout counter** was in the back. James had plenty of time to think about what he was going to say to her when she finally reached him.

He wondered why his uncle wanted the counter at the far end. Someone once explained that his uncle was proud of it. This wasn't a supermarket but a small shop where he trusted his customers.

James left it that way and all his customers had to walk all the way down to pay for the books.

And he realized that he also felt safe in this corner.

True or False?

- g) After the accident, James's personal documents were missing, but his keys were still in his pocket.
- h) James and Dr. Vítová kept focusing only on therapy sessions and never crossed personal boundaries.

1.2.11

She walked almost to the back and stopped in front of a military-themed shelf.

Sure, you are definitely going to buy books – James thought sarcastically. And you are definitely interested in the military.

He let her look at the books for a moment, then said, "The poetry is over there. Especially French."

She turned her head. "I don't like poems, and I hate anything French. Ask anyone who knows me, and you know what they'll tell you?"

"That you don't like poems and anything French?" He responded automatically.

His head began to buzz.

Wait! That's déjà vu! He had heard this before. He had answered like this before. Yes, something like this...

"Well, you see, and you hardly know me." She said, shifting weight from foot to foot.

It was clear that standing here was uncomfortable for her. He wanted to offer her a seat at the reading table, but he didn't want to offend her or show that he noticed her illness.

He also could not **get rid of** the buzzing in his head.

They looked at each other. In her look, there was expectation. His look was empty.

It reminded him of something, but then it **was gone** again.

Hopefully, this was the moment when he would start to remember. But it would probably hurt a lot.

LEARNING TIP

to get rid of something – něčeho se zbavit

1.2.12

"I've seen you a few times on the corner over there," he said, waving his hand towards the door. He did not even know why he said it. He simply felt that he should say something, and he did not know what.

"Oh," she said. And then silence.

She was not looking at the books, she was still looking at him. Then she looked around a bit and walked to the reading table. She sat down carefully. Her breathing was suddenly faster.

"Are you okay? Do you want some water?"

He needed a moment to think, and going for a glass of water seemed like a **good excuse**. He just needed to take a breath.

"No..., James," she replied slowly.

He was sure she used his name to see how he would react.

She knows him! That is not a coincidence!

Maybe she is the woman from the edge of that deep ravine... And she doesn't know what he remembers. It had already been five years when finally, the first memory came. When finally, a friend came back.

Or, maybe, an enemy. He could not be sure.

True or False?

- i) When the woman said she hated poems and anything French, James suddenly felt déjà vu and his head began to buzz.
- j) James was certain she was the woman from the cliff and remembered exactly what had happened.

1.2.13

"I've waited so long for someone to come. Why did it take you five years?"

"So, you remember me?"

He could hear the hope in her voice, but he had to disappoint her.

"No," he admitted. "Not at all, I'm sorry. But I **figured it out**. Somehow, I figured it out. I've waited five years here!" It slipped out of his mouth. "I'm sorry, ... I don't know if you know that I..."

"Yeah, I do. You had an accident, you forgot everything. I had an accident too. But I didn't forget. I just couldn't come."

He sensed it was difficult for her too. But what happened? What kind of accident did she have? Why couldn't she come to help the man about whom she knew that had lost his memory? She had been watching him from the opposite corner for weeks, and nothing. Did she enjoy it? And **all of a sudden**, just today, she thought it was a good idea to walk in and tell him?

That's not how he imagined it at all. He wanted to be happy when he met someone from his past, to learn something. But it made him angry.

Somehow, it came too late. It came out wrong.

LEARNING TIP

Figured it out – došlo mi to, pochopil jsem to

all of a sudden = suddenly (z ničeho nic, najednou)

1.2.14

"Shall we go somewhere else to talk? I can't breathe here," she said heavily.

"Wouldn't you rather sit if walking is hard for you?"

"What do you mean?"

"I won't pretend I didn't notice. I know people with multiple sclerosis. And I can't leave **anyway**; I close at seven."

"James, I think I know what happened, and I think we were in the car together. I'm not sure, I don't remember clearly. It's crazy that we both forgot. You have that scar on your head, but your hair hides it well. I can't hide mine. You can see how I walk." She **blurted** it out. She knew she needed to say it quickly because she might lose courage.

He tried to process the idea that they knew each other, that she knew about the car, that they had been in it together.

But then, they had only found him, but what about her? No one ever mentioned finding someone else. If she could remember, they could search... Oh no! It was too complicated...

He carefully ran his hand over the long scar. He didn't think about it much. It didn't hurt, and she was right. His hair covered it well.

True or False?

k) James pretended (that) he hadn't noticed her problems with walking.

Who did it?

l) Who suggested leaving the shop at once so they could talk somewhere else.
James or Julie?

1.2.15

"And what happened to you? No, wait," he paused. "Who are you? What's your name?"

"I'm Julie. Leopold Kočandrle was my great grandfather."

"You mean the writer?" He quickly walked to the counter to get the book which he had started reading a few days ago. He opened it to a page with a dedication written in old cursive. *To my dear Julie, Leopold.*

"Yeah, the dedication is for my great grandma. I'm named after her."

"And where did this book come from **all of a sudden**? Did I just pull it off the shelf and start reading it? And then you came. And it's all just a **coincidence**?"

"I tried to help you remember. I sent you messages and hints. And the book... So you wouldn't be scared when I come in. I wanted you to remember, to remember me, to... look for me, maybe. It didn't work well... I guess it's strange..."

"It's not," he said firmly. "It's not strange. I was expecting someone to look for me too. **I get that**, but what happened to you? Why didn't you come here a long time ago?"

She laughed awkwardly. "To be honest, I couldn't come because I didn't have my legs."

She didn't give him a moment to think and pulled up her wide trousers.

He was shocked.

LEARNING TIP

I get that = I figured it out – chápu to, rozumím tomu, došlo mi to (dle kontextu)