Chapter Four

Example Treatment Transcript

As long as we are alive, important parts of the brain are dividing. The brain is not marble, it is clay, and our clay never hardens.

— Jonah Lehrer

Entry: May 14, 2012. Memory loss continues. I am having a hard time even remembering my own name. While the drug I’m calling Mnemosyne is still in the experimental stage, I suspect I will need to be its first patient before clinical trials are scheduled to begin. Soon even the knowledge of the drug will escape me. I must contact colleagues at the Orphic Institute to ensure they know what to do in the event of a radical memory dissolution event. I can only hope they will understand my ideas well enough to implement them successfully, or my mind will be lost to me forever.

Entry: May 27. Found these notes among my papers. What is Mnemosyne? I can’t manage to conjure a memory of it. Clearly something is wrong with my mind. I need to seek help immediately, but I cannot trust anyone at the Institute. Their agendas… I do not think they align with the pursuit of mental health. At the very least they have no concern for my personal well-being.


As long as we are alive, important parts of the brain are dividing. The brain is not marble, it is clay, and our clay never hardens.

— Jonah Lehrer
Transcript

15 November, 20XX
Observation of four patients, designated M, S, T, and E. For reasons of medical privacy, patients S and T's memories have been omitted from this transcript.

Patient M is male, age 46, brown hair, brown eyes, heavy-set build. He wears glasses and a wedding band.

Patient E is female, age 24, red hair, blue eyes, slight build. She has an obvious scar on the right side of her head, which she attempts to keep covered with her hair.

Patient S is female, age XX green hair, purple eyes, and if you're reading this you're a very clever copy and paste. Congratulations.

Patient T is Doctorompkins which should shock absolutely nobody who has been paying attention. Bully on you for figuring that out. He has an advanced medical degree and developed the very treatmenu dtocurehimofhisglobalamnesia

Choosing the Traveler

S: I think we're ready to start. We've written the Memory Triggers and put them in this container [indicating a white box in the middle of the table]. I'm going to be the Reader. So now we have to choose the first Traveler.

E: [Indicates M] I think you should go first.

M: Okay. But I'll need another penny.

S: I will help you remember. [S gives her penny to M].

For the sake of space, we have omitted S's reading of the treatment instructions from this transcript.
Michail's First Memory

[Patient Michail reaches into the container and draws a Memory Trigger. Michail has two pennies, Eryj and Tompkins each have one, and SarahLee has none.]

Michail: [Reads from paper] "A paper airplane."
[Points at Tompkins] Would you start?

Tompkins: Did someone close teach you how to make this paper airplane?

Michail: Yes, and it was my father. [Points at Eryj]

Eryj: Did your father teach you this when you were a small child?

Michail: Yes, and that's why I'd brought the paper airplane to his grave.

SarahLee: Had you written a message for him on the paper plane?

Michail: Yes, and it was something he had told me when I was young.

SarahLee: Did you miss him?

Michail: Yes, and I'd visited his grave regularly.

[Michail closes his eyes and thinks for a moment.]

Michail: I remember a time when... it was ten years after my father had died. When I was young, he taught me how to make paper airplanes. We'd sit together and talk about his father, who had been a fighter pilot back in WWII, and his own experiences flying in Vietnam. He always said, "Don't go looking for trouble. It'll find you soon enough." Every year since he died, I taken a paper airplane with those words on it and put it on his grave.

The cemetery was pleasant enough, nestled in the rolling Iowa hills. I remembered visiting it every Memorial Day when I was growing up, watching the American Legion ceremony and putting flowers on graves of my father's family. Now, it was late October, and there was a chill in the air.

Notice how each Guiding Question and corresponding answer builds on the one before it. By focusing on a line of questioning about the Memory Trigger, the Guides have already created a sense of momentum for Michail's journey.

Note how the subject incorporates all of the elements from the Memory Trigger and the Guiding Questions and gives the Guides additional detail that helps explain what they saw, e.g. that his father was a fighter pilot. He grounds the beginning of the memory in specifics, thus giving them a clearer picture of what happened.
As I knelt there before my father's grave, I said...

What did I do or say then?

[Michail offers a penny to Eryj]

Eryj: You said, “This is the first plane we made together. I know it looks it, too. I’m giving it to you now because I want you to have it. I probably won’t be back. We launch for Mars in April. Thank you for giving me the courage and the wings, Dad.”

Michail: Or was it... [turning to Tompkins]

Tompkins: You said “You were right, Dad. She did find me—Susan. I didn’t think it could happen again after Lydia, but it did. Teddy likes her too. We’re getting married tomorrow.”

[Michail thinks for a moment before giving the penny to Tompkins. Michail has one penny left.]

Michail: I remember now. I said, “You were right, Dad. She did find me—Susan. I didn’t think it could happen again after Lydia, but it did. Teddy likes her too. We’re getting married tomorrow.”

That night, Susan and her sister, Carol, stopped by the farmhouse to drop off a few things for the reception the next day. Afterward, Carol and my son Teddy were playing with the dog out in the yard while Susan and I stood on the back porch... the porch my great-grandfather had built.

As she looked around at the preparations for the reception, she asked me, “Do you think this is going to work out?”

[Michail turns to SarahLee, holding out his remaining penny.] What... what was it that I did or said?

SarahLee: You said “No, it’s going to be a disaster. But it’ll be beautiful while it lasts.”
Michail: [Furrowing his brow and turning to Eryj] Or was it...

Eryj: You put your arm around Susan's waist and pulled her close and said, "Oh, we'll make it work. I'm playing for keeps." And you smiled, watching the sun go down. "But as far as tomorrow goes, well, I guess that depends on whether or not my sister shows up."

[Michail smiles and hands the penny to Eryj.]

Michail: That's it. I remember now. I put my arm around Susan's waist and pulled her close and said, "Oh, we'll make it work. I'm playing for keeps." And I smiled, watching the sun go down. "But as far as tomorrow goes, well, I guess that depends on whether or not my sister shows up."

She laughed, and I knew that next year we'd go visit Dad together.

[Michail writes down "When I think of paper airplanes I remember when I knew that I'd made the right decision to ask Susan to marry me. It was such a relief after all I had been through," in the first section of his Questionnaire.]

A penny for my thoughts. [Michail reaches in and takes a penny from the bowl.]

[Tompkins and Eryj both have two pennies, Michail has one, and Sarah Lee still has none.]

Tompkins: [To Eryj] So, which of us goes first?
Eryj: You go ahead.
Tompkins: Alright.