

# Super Memory Woman

Melanie Graham

Scientists have found a woman  
who never forgets a thing, can remember  
any moment from any given day—  
if you throw out August 17, 1987,  
most people would say it was probably hot and Clinton  
was president, or was it still Reagan? But she will know  
it was Reagan for sure, Bush Sr. was vice,  
the humidity was a rare twenty percent with cirrus clouds  
to the east, lunch was ham and swiss on rye with sweet  
hot mustard, that she wore those electric blue  
pleather pumps that rubbed a silver dollar-sized  
blister on her heel, and they didn't make  
Band-Aids big enough back then so she patched together  
two, but the bottom one kept falling off, bursting  
the blister and staining her shoe, that Rudolf Hess, 93, hung himself  
in Spandau Prison with an electrical flex, that her mom  
called twice, once at 1:15 and then later when she got off work  
at 5:36, to ask about her ex and having salmon for dinner,  
and on the soaps, Tom was tired of Skye's scheming, Monica  
was still in a wheelchair, and Anna and Duke were finally getting married  
but she refused to sleep with him before the wedding  
even though they had fornicated like rabbits for six whole seasons,  
and she would also know the futility of trying to re-virginize yourself,  
of ruminating on the past, and, normally, I can't even remember  
how old I am, just know, according to Yale,  
I'm no longer "younger," but if you were to say to me,  
"7/31/91," I would know at 12:20 we were talking about  
Smokin' Doug, he of the Elvis hair and tribal ankle, and I was lying  
on my stomach, top undone, a travel pillow hiding  
my breasts slathered with a tropical oil that smelled like  
those air fresheners everyone had in the 70s—  
coconut and something else islandish—reading  
News of the Weird about some guy who had been playing  
"Hold Your Breath" while driving and passed out,  
injuring himself and three passengers, and, it was my birthday,  
so, true to form, we were drinking

soda in glass bottles, eating chocolate croissants  
and those green and pink Italian butter cookies  
from that place we couldn't pronounce, before  
either of us had cell phones or could swim,  
not that we wanted to talk to anyone else or go in  
deeper than our calves (since I'd read that sharks  
attack most often in thigh-high water, horizontal  
bullets with gaping razored maws), but that day  
neither of us wanted to wade in and come out salt-sticky,  
so we lay prostrate under the ninety-degree sun, and I had just read  
aloud the one about the woman who got caught  
smuggling drugs in her vagina and denied  
they were hers, and we were laughing and  
crying, while the little girl in the hibiscus print bikini  
was drowning in that quiet way  
no one talks about, not flailing her arms  
like a spasmodic tap dancer, or screeching  
like a naked teenager being chewed to pâté by Jaws,  
but floating vertical, head tilted back, mouth  
half-open, sun-streaked hair an unseeable buoy,  
probably watching us choke on our Cokes,  
fizz coming out your nose, me reaching over  
to pound your back with a sandy hand, before  
gasping twice, then going under for good.

# JonBenét's Internet Legacy

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Photo One:

*Baby*

Propped among crocheted clowns  
"Toys Mama Made"

Photo Two:

*Show girl*

Pointed toe in size two heels, black fishnets,  
Hips tied to feather train

Photo Three:

*Cowgirl*

Ribbon rope, fuchsia-tipped fingers  
Laced under chin

Photo Four:

*Princess*

Scarlet Empress lipstick, polka dot dress,  
Organza bow knotting the throat

Photo Five:

*Autopsy*

Head to the left, to the right,  
Neck arched,  
Ligature noted

# Something I'd Never Tell

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I remembered the price of sharing,  
the night we bought wine and index cards  
to play Something You'd Never  
Tell and when mine was drawn and read

aloud: *I've got a crush on Ted Bundy*—a pause,  
then Sue Ann choked on her Clos du Bois,  
and someone said *he was a young Republican, too!*  
forking her throat and gagging

like we used to do in third grade, and when  
everyone looked at each other, trying to finger  
the freak, I looked too, knowing I could never say  
how I'd watched him lie a thousand times

on YouTube, James Dobson leaning in,  
calling him Ted, as if they weren't in Starke  
the night before the execution but at a bar,  
watching football: *pass the peanuts, Ted,*

*hey, Ted, get a load of those tits,*  
as if the signs outside didn't say, "Tomorrow  
is FRY-DAY," knew I couldn't begin  
to defend myself, citing the women

who'd packed the safe seats during his trial  
in sundresses and straw wedges, craned  
their coiffed heads toward a clear view  
of evil peacocking in polyester,

or explain the spring at Uncle Lem's,  
walking the dusky ridge, his words  
drowned by crackled singing, how I searched  
the ground, trees, seeing nothing but rock

and leaves, then the quick grasp  
of his pocked hand, the rattler's  
rasp, its belly exposed like regular flesh,  
how I didn't scream or run, but stepped

toward the writhing air,  
the rage on display.

# Make It Beautiful

*for Jan Beatty*

Melanie Graham

A staggered girl pitching  
toward night class in summer  
spare her diseased knees,  
jagged palms, this limping  
phosphorescent solo. The bouncing

ball, child's chasing hand, the nest  
of rattlers, reduce them  
to fresh embryos in jellied shells,  
their mother's body limp as a  
cast-off hose in the road. The twenty-week

aborted fetus, twist-tied, still  
alive in a HazMat bag, sever  
the small, subtle wave,  
quicken the hours,  
stave the hunger. Make it

a beautiful day in Islam,  
let the pilfering hand inside  
a daughter's cloth  
be ripe  
for chopping, when the relatives  
come, lips wet  
with tradition, let her come  
before the stones.