

“GRAY MATTERS”

By Jean Blasiar

a monologue

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A young man is sitting in a desk chair with rolling casters behind a semi circular desk. He is dressed all in gray and wearing earphones and a mouthpiece.

Beside him is a monitoring device similar to the heart/blood pressure gauge machines on wheels in hospital rooms.

On the desk is a laptop, a calculator and an answering machine.

On the wall behind him is a calendar.

The young man is fiddling with the dials of the monitor. When he speaks, he is speaking to himself out loud.

YOUNG MAN

Blood Pressure,,, 140 over 73. Check.

Pulse...

(waves his hand in the air side to side)

A little high. That party last night.

All vital signs slightly elevated.

Liver... not so good.

Kidneys...

(makes a face)

Don't ask.

Respiration... snoring.

Lungs... clear.

Young man checks the message machine.

And you left me a message this afternoon.

(supposedly listens)

What is the name of that guy I saw yesterday at the game? Played for USC. Heisman trophy winner. Friend of O.J. Hangs around the USC bench during the games.

Young man turns to the laptop, punches in some data and waits. Says into the mouthpiece of his headphones...

Marcus Allen.

Yawns, settles down, but always checking the monitor for vital signs.
Hits the message machine again.

Another message? This one was early, before you started drinking.

What is Mrs. Hollister's husband's name?

Says into the mouthpiece, which is supposedly connected directly into the subconscious brain of his "subject"...

And how do we know Mrs. Hollister and her husband?

Listens.

What year did you know them?

Listens.

In what context?

Listens.

Punches in data on laptop.
A few seconds later....

George Hollister.

Smiles.

That's it? Of course, that's it. It's all here... everything you ever heard, saw, thought, or felt. But I'm asking you again... please be specific next time. I need dates, times, context in which you knew this person whose name you can't remember. We file by categories, you know. And chronologically. You know the drill. Ask me a question during the day or evening and I'll get back to you. Probably some time around three a.m. when your vital signs are good, breathing and respiratory resting, won't have to go to the bathroom for another hour or so... depending upon how much you had to drink the previous night. So, please, may I remind you again, young man, give me as much information as you can about the name of the person or trivia you can't remember when you're awake and when you are finally down for the night and all vital signs have stabilized... which is not a simple task I might add after a night out with your friends... I'll get back to you with your answer... most likely somewhere around three a.m.

Listens

You're welcome.

At your age and condition, it's all I can do to keep your stress levels within the norms. I'm busy with some pretty scary stuff going on in here. Your cholesterol is off the charts, my friend. I have a reminder in to your frontal lobes to call your doctor tomorrow morning for a checkup. You'll think of it when you wake up.

You're aware that we lost another...

(punches in the numbers on his calculator)

another fifty thousand cells last night. We don't make that up the next day, you know. I put a memo on your right brain to pick up some bananas, oatmeal, granola, Gatorade, and castor oil.

(beat)

Yes, castor oil! And not the pill form.

(beat)

So don't think about it now. And orange juice. For the castor oil.

You can't lose fifty thousand brain cells every day you know. That's...

(hits the calculator keys again for a total)

you don't want to know how many this year.