

The Art of Remembering to Forget

After two underworld slayings, detectives round up all the usual suspects - with no success. Looks like it's time to try the unusual suspects.

INT. POLICE OFFICE - DAY

JOE HAYWARD, 40s, sips an enormous cappuccino as he listens to his colleague, BELLA, 30s, summarise their case.

BELLA

We've been all over their alibis, and it seems like no-one from the underworld had the opportunity or motive to do these killings.

JOE

No-one?

BELLA

Not their enemies, nor frenemies.

JOE

Perhaps the murders aren't linked.

BELLA

The coroner says the bruising pattern on the two dead men was distinctive and similar.

JOE

But, as far as we know, no-one in the underworld killed their two lowlife underworld colleagues?

Phots of LENNIE MCKRAY and BARTY COOMBES lie on the table.

JOE (CONT'D)

Guess we'll have to broaden the search to non-underworld people.

BELLA

What are we missing, Joe?

Bella lays the pictures out side by side. Lennie and Barty alive, then dead on the slab. Both have broken noses and a similar mark on their right temple. Pics of them in cafes. With their wives. Their homes. Their bedrooms. Side by side, we see that although the bedrooms are different styles, they have one thing in common.

BELLA (CONT'D)

Well, would you look at that. They both have one of those.

She points to colourful wooden box on the women's side table.

JOE

So, the wives have the same taste in jewellery boxes? So what?

BELLA

That's not for jewellery. It's a memory box. From Bliss Studios.

JOE

A memory box? For mementos, locks of hair suchlike?

BELLA

No, these are healing boxes, for bad memories you want to be rid of.

JOE

Don't go all woo-woo on me.

BELLA

Miranda Wells who runs Bliss Studios did a Ted talk on it.
(scrolls on computer)
Selective memory for mental health. Apparently marriages thrive if you can forget the arguments and mean comments and only remember the good stuff. The bad things you lock in the box so you can move on. Here.

INT. THEATRE - DAY

A video plays of MIRANDA WELLS, mid 30s, on stage. With *Best We Forget* projected onto the back.

MIRANDA

As a victim of trauma myself, I know how rumination can hurt you. Thinking about dark things over and over, like a tap that never turns off, can do real damage to you and your relationships. But I've found a way to turn my tap off, which I'd like to share. It's a memory box. You take the memories from 'here' (taps temple) and put them in here (taps box). No need to think of them ever again.

INT. POLICE OFFICE - DAY

Joe frowns at the computer screen.

JOE

People don't really fall for that bullshit, do they?

BELLA

Some do. She's doing pretty well ,
from what I hear.

JOE

There's one born every minute.

BELLA

And grudge-holding hasn't done you
any harm, has it Boss?

Joe looks at the pics of the dead men with their wives again.

JOE

I wonder what bad memories of
hubby they put in the boxes. I'd
like to pick the locks on those.
Okay, let's go see her?

BELLA

You mean Ms Wells? Seriously? You
think there's a link.

JOE

Probably not, but anyone who can
convince hard women like these to
believe in this shit, is worth
meeting. Set it up.

EXT. CITY BUILDING - DAY

Entering, Joe passes a silver plate with BLISS STUDIOS.

INT. RECEPTION, BLISS STUDIOS - DAY

Joe looks out of place in this white, softly lit space.
Colourful memory boxes line the shelves. Signs around the
room read - Move on, Leave the Pain Behind. Best we forget.

There's no receptionist, but a bell to ring. He hits it.

MIRANDA WELLS, 30s, all in white appears.

MIRANDA

Detective Inspector Hayward?

JOE

Ms Wells?

MIRANDA

Miranda, please. Come on in.

Miranda gestures through the doorway.

INT. WORKSHOP - DAY

Shelves with colourful boxes line one wall. Around the room, messy tables show the art of creation underway. Three craftspeople work on the boxes. Painting, glueing on jewels/crystals. There's a jewel-cutting machine, piles of wood, shiny hinges, a wood planer, lacquer, etc.

JOE

So this is where the magic happens?

MIRANDA

The magic, yes. We have some mice in cages out the back. We use their tails, sometimes their whiskers. And when we're done, we pop what's left into the cauldron for supper.

Joe chortles.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

The magic's in the person, not the hardware.

He picks up a wooden box inlaid with colourful stones.

JOE

A beautiful box. I bet you got top marks in woodwork at school.

MIRANDA

Yes, That's where my love of wood began. The colour, the way it changes in the sunlight. Watching something beautiful emerge from the rough.

JOE

You're an artist.

MIRANDA

No, just a craftswoman.

JOE

But the real art is in how you convince people that a pretty box is much more than it appears.

MIRANDA

You don't approve, detective? It does seem a bit spacey, I suppose. But it's a symbolic way of letting go of the bad things in the past. Especially in relationships. They're like precious stones gone cloudy through wear over time.

She picks up a crystal, with a milky interior. He studies it.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

But if you take away the bad times, the sour moments. And lock them in a box, you don't need to keep ruminating on them. You'd be surprised how much better you feel. Our minds really do have the power to set us free.

Joe turns a key in a lock. Opens a box, and looks inside.

JOE

Do I talk into it? Hello. That last perp said such mean things to me. He hurt my feelings.

Miranda takes the box off him, locks it up and puts it back.

JOE (CONT'D)

I'm afraid we come at the problems from opposite directions. You encourage a sweeping under the rug, a pretense that everything's rosy in the garden. I have to look under the rug, dig up the floorboards and the dirt to find the bodies buried. I would argue it's only by exposing truth to the light, that we heal.

MIRANDA

And how's that working out for you, detective? Does your wife or partner like you bringing their skeletons into the sun.

JOE

I'm divorced.

She nods. *It figures.*

MIRANDA

On the phone, you said were interested in two particular boxes.

(MORE)

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Those belonging to Shelley McCray and Carla Coombes. I've looked up their details. They purchased deluxe sets.

JOE

That figures. You'd need a big box to keep the nasty memories of those guys locked up. Can I see one?

She gives him a fancy silver box, lined with velvet inside.

MIRANDA

They were something similar. All our boxes are individually crafted.

JOE

Mind if I take this for a few days?

MIRANDA

Knock yourself out.

INT. CAR - EVENING/INT. BLISS STUDIO -(FLASHBACK)

The box sits on the passenger seat. Joe pulls up outside a city gym MISSION POSSIBLE. He talks to Bella on an earpiece.

JOE

Yeah, I saw her shiny boxes. Very nice. But I saw something else. The three people working in the studio looked hostile when I came in.

As Joe is introduced, the three workers - two women and a MAN - give him unfriendly looks.

JOE (CONT'D)

Didn't match the woo-woo vibe they're going for.

The MAN leans over to grab something from a chair, but doesn't move his lower half.

JOE (CONT'D)

Plus when the guy needed something from the other table, he bent over backwards to get it, rather than just walking a few steps. I had the feeling he wanted to block my view of something.

BELLA (O/S)

Uh-huh. Anything else, Sherlock?

JOE
Anyone wearing that much white ...

BELLA (O/S)
...has something to hide?

JOE
...knows how to wash their whites better than me. All mine end up shades of grey. And, Bella, can you go see the wives of those dead underworld guys and get me one of those boxes. Make up some excuse.

BELLA (O/SP)
You don't really think there's a connection, do you?

INT. MISSION POSSIBLE, GYM EVENING

Joe enters the gym. People are spidering up a climbing wall, working out on machines or sparring in the corner.

JOE (V/O)
I know these people are more than what they seem.

He bails up a GUY passing in MISSION POSSIBLE T-shirt.

JOE (CONT'D)
Excuse me, I'm looking for Miranda-

He sees her, dressed all in black, kick boxing against a male opponent. They punch hard. Every so often her foot flies up to high-kick the side of his head. Finally, she knocks him down. Then she helps him up and they bow to each other.

She notices Joe.

MIRANDA
Detective? What are you doing here?

JOE
So you don't wear white all the time?

MIRANDA
No. What can I do for you?

JOE
Your colleagues told me where to find you.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

I'd like to ask you for a list of clients who've bought your boxes over the past six months.

MIRANDA

Fine. I'll get it to you, tomorrow.

JOE

That was easy. I thought you might pull the old client-craftswoman privilege.

MIRANDA

I'm not a psychologist.

JOE

But I guess people do confide in you from time to time. I saw the room with the sofas at the studio?

MIRANDA

Some people are holding onto a lot, you know.

He looks up at the top of the rock wall, where Miranda's male colleague is hanging on, and glaring down at the him.

JOE

I can see that.

INT. POLICE STATION - NEXT DAY

Bella squints through a list on her screen, as Joe plonks a cappuccino on her desk.

JOE

That's for getting the box. Where is it?

Bella nods and points to the beautiful box on the desk.

BELLA

From Carla Coombes. Oh, and Bliss Studios emailed their list of customers who've bought boxes over the past six months. Interesting reading. A few names look familiar.

He perches on the desk and reads the screen.

JOE

Benicio Devlin's wife bought one? That must have been a month before her husband got that beating. Lost most of his teeth. It was an improvement if you ask me. That case is still open.

BELLA

I know this woman's name. Her hubby was a domestic abuser who turned up dead in the harbour. She bought the box six weeks before.

JOE

They get a box. Tell it their secrets. All the bad things their husbands have done. And their hubby gets bopped or popped.

Joe picks up the box and takes a long swig of cappuccino.

JOE (CONT'D)

Do we know what the trauma was Miranda Wells went through?

BELLA

Still looking into it. I can't find any record of her before five years ago when she started the business. Nothing on google, or social media.

JOE

What about facial recognition?

BELLA

Nada.

JOE

Maybe someone hit her in the face - a partner or father - and she had face work done. Look for major assaults in the past 10 years.

BELLA

Will do.

Joe regards the photos of the dead men, still on the desk. They each have with a similar mark on the right temple.

JOE

Could that mark be from a kick in the head, do you think?

BELLA

Maybe?

JOE

Me and the box will be in tech.

INT. TECHNICAL OFFICE, POLICE - DAY

CHANDLER, TECH GuY, studies the jewels on the box through special glasses.

CHANDLER

I've heard about these memory boxes. They're a good idea. If you've done any therapy then-

JOE

Quack. That's what I think of therapy. So tell me about the box?

CHANDLER

Noo obvious hidden compartments.

He moves a metal device over it and it beeps. He frowns.

CHANDLER (CONT'D)

Wait. That jewel seems to be some sort of transmitter.

Wide-eyed, Chandler mouths 'Still active.'

JOE

(whispers)

So someone's listening now?

Chandler nods. He rummages in his drawer till he finds a hammer. He raises it to strike the bug. Joe catches his arm and shakes his head. Then he moves up real close and speaks right into the jewel.

JOE (CONT'D)

Let's go and visit Mrs Benicio Devlin in the morning. I'd love to get a look inside her memory box.

Chandler, nods, catching on. Joe hurries out.

EXT. RITZY APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Bella is in the car watching the building, when there's a noise at the door. Joe gets in the car with coffees for them.

BELLA

More coffee? And what if I'm on the loo when the perp turns up?

JOE

What'd I miss?

BELLA

Nothing, yet. Few cars in and out. Some pizza delivery guys. Far as I can tell Miranda's having a night at home. We have a guy out back. But no action there either.

JOE

Can I see the log?

BELLA

How sure are we that she'll try to steal the Devlin box tonight?

JOE

Not that sure. Unless she bugged that too. She wouldn't want us finding out about it.

He looks down the list at car registration numbers, and descriptions of drivers. Then at the Pizza delivery, in. Pizza delivery out. He backtracks.

JOE (CONT'D)

I'm seeing three pizza guys in, and four out. The last one left 10 minutes ago.

BELLA

(looks at log)

Ha! Sneaky witch! She dressed up as a pizza guy and got by us.

JOE

Luckily, we know where she's going.

As they drive off, Joe puts the siren on top.

EXT. RUNDOWN HOUSE/SIDE OF HOUSE - NIGHT

They draw up quietly, lights off. Then get out.

With hand signals, Joe says he's going one side and Bella should go another.

Joe presses his face to a window. A WOMAN mid-40s watches TV. He moves along to the next window, which is slightly ajar - to a bedroom. Inside, a hand snatches up a shiny box.

He waits for the intruder to climb out then jumps them. They're in black with a face covering. They fight and are quite evenly matched. The intruder high-kicks at Joe's head. Anticipating this, Joe grabs the foot mid-air and twists it around, dropping the intruder onto the ground.

Bella arrives to find Joe sitting on the assailant. He yanks off the face mask. It's Miranda.

JOE

Ah, Ms Wells. By day, crafty woman,
by night crafty vigilante.

MIRANDA

All of these guys were scum. You
should hear what their partners
have had to put up with. The
world's better off without them.

JOE

Couldn't agree more. But
technically it's still a crime.

BELLA

(handcuffs her)
You have the right to remain
silent. If you waive that right...,

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

They watch Miranda, being put into a padi wagon.

BELLA

She was a domestic violence victim.
Her husband smashed up her face.
She's had more than a dozen of
reconstructive surgeries.

JOE

I guess she couldn't let it go.

Bella starts the engine.

JOE (CONT'D)

Wait! There's something I need to
let go of.

He gets out and runs into the bushes. Bella shakes her head.