

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Memory Market

A science fiction short story by C.R. Lang

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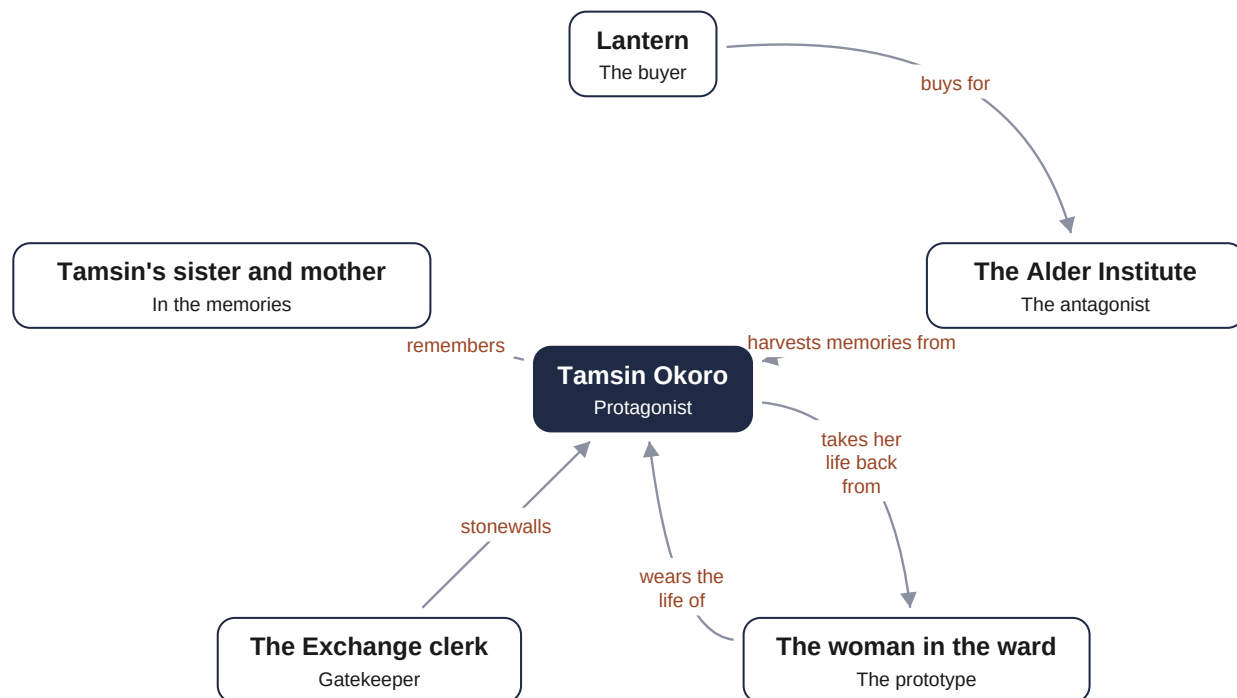
About the story

In 2061, when memories are bought and sold like goods, an engineer finds her happiest days vanishing from her mind, sold without her consent, and follows the trail to a clinic that is building a person out of her life.

This guide assumes everyone has finished the story, so it discusses the ending.

Character map

The main character is in the dark box. Arrows show who acts on whom.



Who's who

Tamsin Okoro (Protagonist). An engineer who ‘trusted traces.’ Her life rated unusually high on every metric.

Lantern (The buyer). The pseudonym that bought her memories in order.

The Alder Institute (The antagonist). A private clinic trying to prove a person can be built from purchased pieces.

The woman in the ward (The prototype). About sixty. Remembers Lisbon in Tamsin’s own words.

The Exchange clerk (Gatekeeper). Polite, practiced, and certain the biometrics match.

Tamsin's sister and mother (In the memories). The wedding and the phone calls that were taken.

Themes to look for

Memory as identity. ‘A memory was not an object. It was a thread, and the self was only what you wove from it.’

Consent and theft. Her signature, retina and voice all ‘match.’ What does consent mean when your identity can be copied?

Commodified happiness. The thieves take only the warmest things she owns.

Moral cost. Taking her life back leaves the woman in the bed frightened and empty.

Discussion questions

- 1 Tamsin had sold memories before, ‘minor grief mostly.’ Does that change how you feel about her loss?
- 2 Why do the thieves take her happiest memories specifically, and in order?
- 3 How did you feel when the woman in the ward described Lisbon in Tamsin’s words?
- 4 The Institute calls its work a kindness. Is there any truth in that?
- 5 Phase Four aims to build ‘a complete self assembled from purchased pieces, with no original at all.’ Is such a person real?
- 6 Tamsin pulls her memories back, knowing it will hurt the woman in the bed. Was she right?
- 7 What does Tamsin mean when she decides no one can ‘weave for you’?
- 8 Would you sell a painful memory if you could? What might you lose along with it?

Craft corner

For writers in the group: two ways to look at how the story is built.

World-building. The Exchange, auction houses and Sable & Vane are sketched in a few lines. Which details made 2061 feel real?

Stakes. The danger grows from one lost wedding to losing an entire self. How does the story raise the stakes step by step?

Try this together

Imagine the Exchange's catalog. Each person writes a one-line listing for a memory they would never sell, with a 'price.' Read them aloud and talk about why some things can't be valued.

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