

Braincase - Memory 0816

Braincase is a sci-fi interactive fiction game about a whistleblower within a city's police department searching for evidence of corruption via the memory implant of a victim of police violence. The game is a commentary on surveillance and how police often try to dehumanize their victims by reducing them to their perceived 'crimes.' The game consists of viewing the recorded memories of Corey Rowe, a disabled army vet. The game explores who they were as a person contrasted with how the police force is wanting to portray them. This was made for the 2020 Spring Thing IF competition.

The following excerpt is a memory the player character, Sally Hirsch, views later in the game. It is a memory of Corey having their more tech-savvy friend jailbreak the MemStim memory implant to prevent it from uploading recordings to the manufacturer's cloud storage. The memory itself is actually a recollection of the aforementioned memory the implant was able to record due to modification and the way Corey's brain processes information.

Words or phrases that are **BOLD AND IN ALL CAPS** are links to segues in the story players can explore to gain more information, which is presented as indented italics.

A blurry mess of chunky pixels and messy audio. Corey lays on a plush couch, next to them a **PERSON** sits on the floor, typing away at an old, needlessly thick **LAPTOP**.

▼ Person

Their face was obscured, either by clothing or makeup meant to disrupt facial recognition.

▼ Laptop

You can't make anything out through the artifacting present. This must be a recording of a recollection, something MemStim isn't typically capable of. The fidelity of these take a serious dip in quality as the MemStim isn't meant to be a full-fedged brain scanner.

Corey chuckled at the absurdity of it, but worried it might be true. "You really believe other people look at the memories this thing records?"

"Oh, can and do. Governments, marketing companies, employers...information is valuable, no matter what it is or who it's from" remarked the figure. Unease washed over Corey at their response.

"And this stops that? You aren't at risk of making my head explode from voiding the warranty are you?" They stared at the shadow of a fan spinning along the popcorn ceiling, trying to calm themselves.

"Yeah, it will keep your memories 'yours.' Keep the VA from snooping to try and deny you benefits, yadda yadda. And nothing in that thing would explode, if anything it'd melt. I'll let you know, though...this ain't gonna stop Observer."

Corey shuddered at the thought of melted plastic coating their brain like a chocolate shell. "Melt? What do you mean it'll melt? What's Observer?" The figure looks up from the laptop and turns toward Corey. You can make out a hint of beard. "You let them shove that shit in your head, but you don't know about Observer? Ok, so..." He then launches into a detailed **ORIGIN** of the Observer toolkit.

▼ Origin

The software was originally used for testing memory implants while they were in development and initial clinical trials. It was never meant for anything beyond those stages. However, a build of it leaked online where it was further refined by hackers until it was erased from most of the internet. The FBI adopted it for their own use and licensed it to law enforcement agencies.

These versions of the Observer allow users to search facial recognition databases and digitally enhance sections of a recording.

"Whoa."

"Yeah," the figure says, turning back to the screen, "don't get tangled with the police. You're pretty much a walking surveillance camera."

Corey breathes out, trying to calm himself. "So like, they could theoretically be watching us have this conversation?"

"Yup"

They chuckle. "Well, hey there police. First thing, I do not consent to having this Observer thing used on me as evidence."

The figure at the laptop called out. "Don't work like that. Installation is consent. Unless you're awake enough to opt out during your surgery."

Corey's eyes widened. "Hell, I wish they told me that."

They raise a finger in Corey's direction. "That's the point."

Corey shakes their head and rolls their eyes. "Uh, anyway. Just to let you know, whatever the reason for you to be prying like this...I didn't do it. I hope you're having a good day as well. Not the assholes with a badge, but the technician currently watching my life play out like its VOD."

"You creepy!" Shouts the figure at the laptop.