

I remember the game I was obsessed with playing on my phone when my mom died; it was the same game I was obsessed with when my best friend died 10 months later.

It's called Triple Town, and it's one of those simple games of math, this one counting in threes. You build things: three bushes builds a tree, three trees builds a house; then a bigger house, a mansion, a castle, a floating castle, and finally a Triple Floating Castle—the pinnacle of civilization. Everything in multiples of 3.

Because of its simple formula it seeped into my subconscious, and I started creating different patterns of three in the back of my mind, sorta like daydreaming. I've done it with other games. If I focus on a pattern over a long enough period—like multiples of 3—I start seeing them without looking.

That's why I can remember which game I was playing when my mom and friend died: it was already operating in my subconscious. The memory association is powerful and it transports me to a time and place and feeling, not unlike a memory of smell.

That would be an interesting opiate. What if our smart phones grew noses. Could discern scent. And could discharge small bursts of predesigned scents. You could create your own smell memories then.

Say you have a really bad day, or something awful happens to you. You could program a scent that makes you happy or calms—the smell of lilacs, say—and take a sniff to make you feel better. You could store smells to induce memories. Pot pourri in my mom's underwear drawer when I was 5. The smells of childhood summers, the cottage, sunshine, water, fun. The smell of steaks and chocolate and strawberries and and and.

It occurred to me that even though cell phone games are mindless and superficial and I fucking hate them, that our relationship with them is complex because the profound remains intact. The profound can coexist with the superficial. I can think in patterns of three while grieving, deeply. Triple Town has seen me through some tough times. Fucking game.