

MADDY FRANK

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## AT THE FOSSIL SHOW

I'm standing across a table from David at the Mineral, Gem, Fossil Show & Sale in the Affton White-Rodgers Community Center. I know his name is David because that's what it says on his nametag.

David is a part of the Eastern Missouri Society for Paleontology. Their sign, complete with an outline of a *Tyrannosaurus rex*, is hanging behind David's head. On the table between us are fossils, everything from brachiopods to raptor bones, and most of which David collected himself from the Hell Creek Formation in Garfield County, Montana. Comprised mostly of claystone and mudstone, the Hell Creek Formation is filled with fossils from the Upper Cretaceous. You can see millions of years stacked on top of one another.

I wouldn't be able to identify any of the fossils on the table if it weren't for the labels. I might have been able to back when I was actively getting my degree in geology, but now that information is somewhere besides my brain. Maybe in my heart, where I can't access it, but it still feels like it's a part of me.

That's why I come to events like these. It's an attempt to light up my brain, to unstick that information from where it's currently lodged in my aorta. I liked knowing what minerals were what, being able to stand on a mountain and point to a flicker of something and say, *I know what you are*. I'm here for that, or to at least watch other people capture flickers. I also want to buy a dinosaur fossil, which is why I'm standing in front of David. I'm not sure what I'd do with a dinosaur fossil, though. They're all about the size of a fist, mounted on a thin metal rod that's screwed into a wooden