

## We Were Lovers

### Chapter 1

'Who are you?'

Three words that changed everything.

When she'd first spoken them to me, I hadn't realised the true potential of the situation. I'd been confused, worried. A part of me thought she was joking, or having an odd moment. Maybe she couldn't see my face properly, didn't recognise me. Maybe the drugs were messing with her mind.

Now, fast-forward a month and a half, and the temporary amnesia didn't seem so 'temporary' any more.

I led my sister, Sarah, through our home. Showed her where the bathrooms were and which room was her bedroom. I gave her a tour of the kitchen, showed her how to operate the television in the living room. I couldn't, unfortunately, tell her the password to her computer. But I could tell her all about the hobbies and interests she'd had before the accident.

My heart thumped heavily in my chest as my sister sat down on her bed, looked around her bedroom as if taking the sight in for the first time ever.

Was I certain I wanted to do this? Was I really going to take such a huge, insane risk?

The doctors said that my sister's amnesia was temporary. A result of the trauma to her head. They said it'd only last a few hours. A day or two at most.

That'd been weeks ago.

And yet here Sarah was, still having no idea who she was. Not remember anything before waking up in a hospital bed, me and Mom and Dad sitting around her.

'Who are you?'

Three words that'd been burned into my brain. Repeating over and over in my head every day since then. Pain and uncertainty laced the words at first. Then the spark of an idea. An insane, stupid idea. One that couldn't possibly work. Yet...

"Sarah," I said, drawing my sister's attention to me.

Her almond eyes gazed at me, pale green irises seeming almost empty – hollow. Heart-shaped face devoid of emotion save for curiosity, a mild interest. Her full lips were parted slightly.

Save for the bandage wrapped around her forehead like a large, white hairband - holding back her milky brown hair – there were no hints or signs of the accident or Sarah's injuries.

"Yes?" My sister spoke, tilting her head to one side.

"Do you remember what you said, the first time you saw me? When you woke up, I mean. In the hospital. Do you remember what you asked me?"

Sarah shook her head sadly, eyes downcast.

"No," she whispered. "I don't. I'm sorry."

"You asked me who I am. And, well, now you kinda know. I'm your brother. Mom and Dad and the doctors told you that much. You're a year older than me - my big sister, basically. You already know all that stuff, the stuff everyone knows. But there was more to us than just being brother and sister..."

Was I really going to do this?

It'd never work, it was impossible. I would never happen. And, even if it *did* work, even if I got exactly what I wanted, what happened when my sister got her *real* memories back? If I did what I was thinking of doing, what I'd thought up and planned to do, there'd be no turning back.

Sarah stared at me expectantly, waiting for me to continue.

"Well..." I said, voice croaking slightly. I forced down all other thoughts, focused on

only the lie I was about to tell. "Back before the accident. Before you lost your memories. We weren't just siblings. We were... Well... We were lovers."

She'd been hit in the head by a brick. Not one thrown at her or anything like that. It'd been a freak accident. She'd been passing by a construction site, something went wrong with what the builders were doing, one of the bricks went flying. My sister had just been in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Lots of panic and blood-loss and emergency surgery later, and there she was. Lying on a hospital bed, staring up at people she saw as strangers.

At first, she'd been confused.

Who were these people sitting around her, smiling and crying and looking worried? And where was she anyway? Why was she in a hospital?

It took her a long few moments to ask herself the most important, vital question.

Who was she?

She couldn't remember. Had no idea. Her mind, for whatever reason, had no recollection of any events prior to her waking up in that hospital bed surrounded by three strangers. A middle-aged man and woman, and a younger guy.

People tried telling her who she was.

Sarah. Daughter and sister. Student by day, waitress by night. A loner who liked to spend her free time reading alone. A kind, quiet soul. A good person, who loved animals and dreamed of becoming a vet.

Yet, for all that they told her who she was, she didn't *feel* it.

No amount of information on who she used to be helped her in figuring out who she actually *was*.

What did she like? Dislike? What did she love? Hate? What was her favourite food? Why? What did she want from life?

Who was she?

No answers came to her. Not in hospital. Not while she'd been trapped in a small room, eating hospital food and waiting for the doctors to give up on *fixing* her and release her instead.

A month and a half since she'd woken up, not knowing who she was.

And the only thing she *truly* knew about herself was that she absolutely *hated* hospital food.

"Lovers?" Sarah repeated, eyes wide. "We were... lovers?"

I nodded my head, glancing quickly at the bedroom door. Only Mom was home, and I doubted she'd interrupt. But even so, it'd be bad if *anyone* overheard this conversation.

"We are – were – a lot closer than people think," I continued in a rush, rehearsed words rolling off my tongue. "We had to pretend that we weren't close so nobody would suspect anything. But me and you, we were *very* close."

Her eyes ran up and down my body, doubt clear in her expression.

"We've been doing it – you know, having sex – for a long time," I added, feeling my face flush bright red.

Sarah's gaze lingered on my crotch for a heartbeat, then shot quickly back up to my face. She started blushing as brightly as I was, glanced away from me completely.

"I don't-" My sister began to say, but I cut her off.

"I know," I told her. "It's weird. And I'm not expecting you to want to have sex with me now or anything. Without you having any memories of us being together, all the romantic stuff, I doubt you're all that interested in doing... *that*. I just figured it's something you should know."

Awkward silence fell over both of us. Uncomfortable and uneasy. When it started to become unbearable, I spoke again.

"Well... Uh... I guess I'll leave you to it," I said, slowly sidestepping to Sarah's bedroom door. "Let you get settled in and all that. If you need anything, or want me to show you where anything is, my room is right next to yours."

It wasn't until I opened the bedroom door, was about to step through it, that my sister spoke again.

"Brandon," she said softly, staring at me intently. "What kind of person am I?"

An odd question, given the 'revelation' I'd just given her. I'd been expecting her to ask about us and our relationship, or demand proof that we'd had sex before. Instead, she'd decided to ask *that*.

I thought about it for a few seconds before answering.

"Contemplative," I said at last, eyes locked with hers. "You think about things. All the things. Everything, all the time. Or, you used to at least. You used to spend hours and hours sitting in bed, doing nothing but thinking about some random, irrelevant thing."

Sarah's gaze lowered, thoughtful.

I took that as my sign to leave.

Back in my own bedroom, I went straight to the chest at the foot of my bed. Locked shut, made of hardwood. It looked like the kind of chest you'd see in a bad pirate film. Old and beaten up, but still firm and strong. A family relic, passed down to me when I was a kid and my grandfather passed away.

Back then, I'd used it to keep my toys and comics hidden. Treated the chest as a prop for my pirate fantasies.

Nowadays, it contained a very real treasure.

I slipped an old, half-rusted key in the chest's lock, turned it and heaved the chest's lid open.

And there, in multiple huge piles, were my sister's diaries and journals.

Going back years and years, each one containing a wealth of information on Sarah. My prize, stolen from her room while she'd been trapped in hospital. These were my tools, my weapons. The things that'd give me all the information I'd need to trick my sister into believing the lie.

I hadn't lied when I'd told my sister that she used to contemplate everything, spend huge amounts of time just thinking about random crap. I'd simply left out the part where she'd recorded her thoughts in journals and diaries.

In this treasure chest, I had everything I needed and more.

All the knowledge to trick Sarah into sleeping with me, accepting me as her lover, right here at my fingertips. Just waiting to be read.

The first days she was in hospital, I was too worried about her to even think of snooping in her room. When it became clear she would be – save for the amnesia – totally fine, I took full advantage of Sarah's absence to go through her room. Her undies and bathing suits were an interesting find, but the book-filled boxes under her bed were the true treasure.

It turned out my sister kept diaries and journals. A lot of them. All stashed away under her bed, collecting dust. Years and years worth of her thoughts and feelings, all recorded on paper.

And, best of all, Sarah's amnesia meant she had no idea about it.

She wouldn't notice the books were missing because she had no memories of owning them in the first place.

I'd only scratched the surface of what the journals had to offer. Barely read a fraction of the pages. And, even then, I'd learned so much about my loner sister.

Right now, it was safe to say, I knew more about Sarah than she knew about herself.

I reached into the chest, plucked out one of the more recent diaries, flipped open

the cover and began reading.

Mom, for the most part, ignored Sarah. Pretended like her daughter didn't exist. From things she'd said, the way she acted, I was pretty sure Mom didn't want to believe Sarah had lost her memories. She'd tricked herself into thinking that Sarah was making it all up, that everything was fine. And, rather than face the reality of the situation, she ran and hid from it. Avoided Sarah at every possibility.

Dad was more understanding, but also not home very often. Work kept him away for most of the day. And, when he was home, he rarely had the energy to entertain his daughter and answer her questions – try to remind her of who she was.

That left me, her brother, to look after Sarah.

When she left the house, I'd always accompany her – to 'make sure she didn't get lost' and such. A blatant excuse, but one that my sister didn't seem to mind all that much.

I showed her around the neighbourhood, guided her to the different shops in the area, told her about bus routes and all that boring stuff. I led the way to a park I'd read about in one of Sarah's diaries – a quiet place she'd liked to go to, a hidden little reading spot.

"This way," I said, walking down a muddy, overgrown path. "It's not far from here."

An old, abandoned park. Once a place that parents would bring their children to play on swings and jungle-gyms and seesaws, now nothing more than a crumbling, rusting ruin. Weeds sprung from the ground, towering tall. Once-bright paint had long since eroded away. What used to be well-kept hedges and trees and other plant-life had grown out of control, wild and unkept and ugly.

I led Sarah to one set of bushes, pushed aside spindly twigs until a small opening appeared in the tangled web of leaves and branches. Just large enough for a person to crawl through.

Sarah looked dubious and uncertain as I got on hands and knees, crawled into the opening.

I couldn't blame her. I was pretty unsure myself.

Was this the right spot? The diary had given a detailed set of directions – everything in those journals was extremely detailed and wordy – but I had no idea if I'd made a mistake, gone for the wrong cluster of bushes.

A little bit of crawling, just a meter or so, and the cramped space opened up into a hollow in the bushes. Enough space for two people to sit. Barely. Surrounded on all side by hedges, out of sight from anyone who – for whatever reason – might pass by.

"Come on," I called through the hole I'd just crawled through. "It's fine. I promise."

Sarah said something, though it was too quiet for me to make out exactly what.

A moment later, leaves rustled and twigs creaked.

Sarah's head poked through the opening, a few small leaves stuck in her hair. She climbed into the cramped space, sat down opposite me and glanced around.

"*This* is what you wanted to show me?" She asked after a few seconds of silence.

"We used to come here a lot," I lied. "It's our secret place."

Sarah turned her gaze on me, scowled slightly.

"Sometimes," I continued, "you'd bring a book with you. We'd sit here and talk for hours, spend time together like a proper couple. Away from the rest of the world. I thought if I brought you back here, it might jog your memories a little."

The opposite was true. I'd been debating *not* bringing her here for that *exact* reason.

But the opportunity was too golden to miss out on.

"Did it?" I asked, heart thumping heavily in my chest. "Do you remember anything?"

Slowly, Sarah shook her head.

I forced back a sigh of relief.

Sarah looked down at the ground, a faint blush appearing on her cheeks. When she spoke, her voice was quiet, soft.

"Did we, *you know*, here?"

"Have sex?" I said, staring at her. I nodded my head. "A lot."

"Really?" She didn't sound convinced. "It's so... *cramped*."

"You say cramped, I say cosy. The only reason it feels like there's no space here right now is because you're sitting away from me. Usually, when we came here, we'd be cuddling."

For a moment, just a brief heartbeat, I felt bad about the bullshit I was spewing. The lies I was telling Sarah. Here she was, brain-damaged, not knowing who she was, and I was manipulating her into believing what I wanted her to.

Then the moment passed.

"I know," I told my sister. "It's strange. Awkward. Brothers and sisters aren't supposed to have that kind of relationship. But we did. It's hard to wrap your head around, I know. When you get your memories back, you'll understand why and how we ended up together. But, until then, you just have to believe me. We, you and I, were in a sexual and romantic relationship with each other."

Sarah didn't say anything in response to that. Just sat there in silence, eyes on the floor.

"If there's anything you want to know, you can ask me," I said, reaching out to place my hand on hers. "Let me help you."

Sarah flinched at my touch, but didn't pull her hand away.

Finally she looked up at me, eyes locked onto mine.

"Who am I?" My sister asked.

We walked home as the sun was setting.

My mind raced with information as the streets around us remained silent and motionless. So many lies, so many untruths for me to remember. I couldn't contradict myself in future, or else Sarah would suspect something was wrong.

When we got home, I'd jot down every lie I'd told, every tale I'd told about the fake past I'd shared with Sarah.

She believed me. Believed we'd been lovers.

That didn't mean she'd be okay with jumping into bed with me right away, but it *did* open a door to the possibility of her sleeping with me in the future. She believed we'd had sex before. All I needed to do was convince her to do it 'again'.

At home, in my locked chest, was everything I required to win Sarah over.

All I needed now was time.

Time to come up with a plan, time to ease Sarah into having a secret relationship with me, time to manipulate her into spreading her legs for me.

As long as I stuck to my story, didn't leave any errors for her to find, it was only a matter of time until she was mine.

Unless she started to remember the truth.

If that happened, I'd be fucked.

I glanced over at her, took in her figure out of the corner of my eye.

Slim, lean. Modest bust and bottom. Her hips swayed a little with each step, hair fluttering in the soft breeze.

I took a deep breath, reached out my hand.

Sarah's body tensed when I lightly grasped her hand.

She looked at me, searched my face.

But she didn't pull away.

We silently held hands for the rest of the walk home.