

AN
IMPOSSIBLE
TRUTH

BOOK 1 OF THE SOMNIA SERIES

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To the one who was and still is
my muse.

1

“So, you’re still a virgin?”

Shit. His tone worried me. I thought he’d be different, more understanding. I looked up at him a bit sheepishly but I couldn’t read his expression. I was sure he could feel the rapid beating of my heart since I was lying on top of his bare chest. Why’d I have to go and ruin the whole evening by admitting my inexperience? *He’s going to reject me—I just know it.* I bit my lip and slowly nodded, confirming his question.

He took a deep breath, pushed me off of him and sat upright. The romantic spell was broken. Brent wasn’t my first boyfriend, but he was the first one I trusted enough to go all the way with, so I had to tell him. I thought he would understand. Perhaps, being a hopeless romantic, I had let my heart get the best of me. Or maybe I was just hopelessly scarred.

Greg. Remembering my first boyfriend’s name made me shudder. Remembering his fingers tracing the skin on my belly, remembering the knife to my throat—

No, stay in the now. This is not the same situation. You’ve dealt with that. You are not seventeen anymore.

Brent was sitting quietly on the edge of the bed. I pushed my glasses up my nose as I moved toward him. Tentatively, I touched his left shoulder and placed a kiss on it. He didn’t move. My fingers traced the side of his bicep. *Please don’t reject me. Prove me wrong.*

My plea remained inside my head. I didn't want to appear needy by speaking them.

The confusion in his blue eyes melted away and he frowned at me. "I don't know what you want me to do with that information, Sophia," he said as he shook his shoulder away, causing my hand to drop. His eyes warned me not to come closer. "You're twenty-six ... and you're a virgin."

I swallowed hard. "Yes," I confirmed wearily. "But Brent, this doesn't have to be an issue. I'm not asking you to do anything with this information—"

"Then what?"

I was taken aback by the harsh tone in his voice. "Then nothing," I replied, trying to contain myself. "It's not a big deal." I tried to smile. "I mean, perhaps I saved myself for someone special?" I stopped myself from rolling my eyes at my own words. *He is never going to fall for that.*

"So, you're saying I should be feeling lucky?" he sneered.

I sighed. "Why is this difficult for you?" I asked softly, pulling the strap of my bra up from where it had slid down my shoulder.

He eyed me carefully. "Is it because of religion? Is that why you haven't ... you know?"

I shook my head, suddenly feeling too naked for this conversation. Since it seemed that we weren't going to go any further, I grabbed my shirt from the floor and put it on. It seemed like ages ago since he had pulled it off of me.

"This explains a lot," Brent remarked. "I thought it was weird that you didn't take any steps in pursuing me. After all, we don't live in the nineteenth century where only the men do all the chasing."

I grunted at his remark. "I know that Brent but—"

Brent continued as though I had not said anything. "Girls usually pursue me. But you didn't. You didn't even want to kiss me on our first three dates. And I wondered why it took so long for you to undress yourself in front of me. I just thought it was because of some kind of insecurity, you know, being a little overweight and all."

As he spoke, my hands fumbled with the hem of my skirt. I

wasn't really paying attention to his words until I heard him mention my weight. Then I heard Greg's voice in my mind. *You're ugly and fat. Nobody wants you.* I gritted my teeth, pushing the memory away.

"I think it's strange," Brent continued, turning toward me and seemingly blind to my uneasiness. "I mean, weren't you curious all those years?"

"Yes of course I was," I snapped at him, then composed myself. "And I still am. But well, sometimes things just don't happen the way you want them to."

For a brief moment, I wondered if I should tell him the whole truth about what had happened in my past. But, even though it might justify my reluctant behavior, something had broken the trust and I didn't feel like exposing myself any further. I recognized that familiar fear again. The fear that had prevented me from pursuing relationships. Protectively, I wrapped my arms around my body.

It was such a long time ago that I had felt truly safe. It was when my dad was still alive. He always made sure I was safe. He was there for me and, with him, I never felt scared. But when he died, the feeling died with him.

I don't feel safe with Brent. With that realization, a pain erupted inside my gut. It tried to make its way up to my throat but angrily, I pushed it back down. I turned my back to Brent. There was no way I was going to sit there and take any more of this crap. If he couldn't look past this, he was not meant to be my first. I grabbed my heels and quickly put them on.

"What are you doing?" The accusatory tone in his voice stung.

"What do you think?" I barked at him without turning to face him.

"You can't leave—"

"Why not? This clearly isn't going anywhere."

As I tried to get up from the bed, Brent grabbed my wrist and pulled me toward him. Immediately I was thrust back into the painful memory with Greg.

"Do you really expect me to let you leave now?" Brent's voice even sounded like Greg's as he spat out those words. The old

scenario was repeating itself and made it hard for me to stay in the moment. I swore I even saw Brent's eyes turn to the dark gray of Greg's.

"You're such a tease," I heard him groan as his hand tightened around my wrist. "Come on. Stay." He pulled me toward him and I turned away again.

"Let me go, Greg."

"Who the hell is Greg?"

Dammit. "It doesn't matter. Now please, let me go!" I pleaded.

Brent let go of my wrist. "I-I'm sorry. I don't know what came over me," he whispered as his hand came up to gently cup my face. I backed away like a scared little girl and hated myself for it. His eyes softened as he tucked a strand of my auburn hair behind my ear. "I don't want to hurt you. I just don't understand any of this." It was like the voice of a young child awaiting repercussions from his parent after acting out.

I took his hand from my face and placed it back on the bed. Anger welled up inside of me. His lack of even attempting to understand me was unnerving. Why was it so hard for him to understand that I needed his warmth after showing my vulnerability and sharing that secret?

"That is what hurts me, Brent, the idea that you need to *do* something with the information. All I needed was for you to be gentle and to reassure me that everything would be fine. I feel like such a fool now for trusting you. And I ..." I was trying to find words to express my emotions but simultaneously, I was battling this growing anger inside of me. "You know what? No. I'm not going to do this. I was ready to ... and you acted this way? No. I just can't deal with this right now."

I stood up. He crumpled forward, leaning his elbows onto his knees. Part of me longed for him to get up to his feet and tell me he was wrong in acting the way he did, to tell me he still wanted me. But another part of me wanted him to stop confusing me. "Brent?" I whispered, but he didn't respond. "Could you just look at me for one second?" I hated my pleading voice, but I couldn't stop it.

When his gaze rose to meet mine, I could see a lack of

understanding, even resentment. I knew from the way he looked at me that I had upset him with my ranting but I couldn't help myself. I inhaled sharply. "Right. I'm going home. Goodbye Brent."

He raised his hand to acknowledge my words, but his eyes didn't follow mine. *I wish you cared for me more than this.* I bitterly made my way to the door.

"Sophia, wait!" He leapt up and grabbed my arm. I was suddenly overwhelmed by that old memory. His nails were digging into my skin.

I turned and pushed him away from me. "Don't touch me!" My voice didn't sound like my own.

He looked surprised as he fell to the floor. But I didn't stop to think about it. Instead, I turned on my heels and ran out of his house. I didn't care that tears were flowing down my cheeks. The only thing I cared about was getting away from him.

On the drive home, the pain in my gut worsened, spreading towards my heart and lungs, until it seemed like I couldn't breathe. Memories blurred with each other: Those of Brent from a few moments ago blended with nine-year-old memories of Greg. It was hard to distinguish which reality I was remembering. His hands on me made me feel dirty all of a sudden.

Thoughts that had haunted me when Brent and I first started dating started to haunt me again. What had I been thinking anyway going out with him? *Why the hell would a guy as attractive as Brent ever go for me?*

Ever since we started dating, I had tried to push the feelings of unworthiness away, but the pain kept them in place like they were pinned right into my heart. So, I sucked up every bit of attention Brent had to offer. He'd brought me flowers on our first date and held the door open for me. He'd been such a gentleman. So unlike Greg.

Brent had always known just what to say even after I told him it wasn't easy for me to trust anyone. I had scars from my past that I tried to overcome. I was glad he hadn't asked me to

elaborate. Other boys had not been as patient. Some had stopped calling me after a few dates. Others told me to “just get over it.” But with Brent, there was this instant ease whenever I was with him. He accepted me for who I really was. But ... had he really? Was tonight not evidence of the exact opposite? Everything could have been one huge lie. Like he had just been playing games with me. *Just like Greg.* But no, he wasn't Greg.

Greg wouldn't have come to fetch me when I needed a ride from work because my car was in the shop. Brent had. He had even brought a blanket because he thought I might be cold. With him everything seemed more natural. He really knew how to sweep me off my feet!

Of course there were things about him that weren't perfect. I didn't always like the way he exaggerated every story he told, or even the way he flirted with other women. But I accepted it all as part of his charm because he was with me. He'd made it so easy for me to trust him. Even with his faults, he had touched my heart in a way no man had ever done before.

I couldn't accept that he was a bad guy. I didn't want to. It just didn't add up. All the hours we had spent together, it was impossible for me to believe that he had faked it. I would have noticed, wouldn't I?

Perhaps I need to break up with him. The thought alone made me cry all over again. Somehow, I made it home through all those tears. I turned off the engine, grabbed my purse and rushed into my apartment building. I avoided the elevator and bolted up the flights of stairs to the fourth floor. Out of breath, I went inside and closed the door behind me. As I leaned against the wall, I slid down, placing my glasses on the floor. With my face in my hands I sobbed anew as I reminisced about everything that had happened earlier. I promised myself never to give into a guy that quickly again.

You don't deserve this pain. Just focus on other things, like work, not on love. Love just hurts. I wiped my glasses with my shirt and placed them back onto my nose. Luna, my brown tabby cat, bumped up against my leg as if to console me.

“Hey sweetheart,” I cooed and stroked her, “did you have a

good day?"

She purred in reply and nudged her head into my hand. My phone buzzed from inside my purse and I took it out. There were three missed calls, and two texts, from Brent.

I'm sorry! His first text said. *Please come back!*

I bit my lip and opened the second text he had sent about ten minutes later.

Fine. There are some serious trust issues going on here, Sophia. I don't know how to deal with that if you don't talk to me. So, until you are ready to talk about it, I think it's best if we don't see each other.

I blinked, for a moment, taken aback by the sudden change in behavior. What was his deal? Why was he doing this?

"Right," I grunted and decisively deleted both texts from my phone. "I guess we're done."

I would be fine. I always was. I would pick up the pieces and go on. But, right now I just wanted to shower and wrap myself in a blanket on the couch with a big bowl of mint-chocolate-chip ice cream and binge-watch one of my favorite TV-shows on DVD.

Keep it together, Sophia. You're not a basket case. Trembling, I got up to my feet. Brent might think I'm the only one to blame for what happened tonight but I'm not going to accept that. There were always two sides to every story.

Luna retreated to the living room with her tail swaying leisurely through the air. It made me chuckle.

My two-bedroom apartment was colorful to say the least. Since I couldn't decide on one, I had painted every room a different color; lavender, pale green and this color called peach puff. The furniture in each room complemented the color. It balanced out really well. My bathroom was the only room that I had kept white. But I accented it with lots of colorful accessories. Color boosted my mood and made me feel more alive.

As I undressed, I let my fingers glide over my bare arms. Everything tingled. Just a few hours before I'd been breathless, thinking that tonight would be the night. I had dreamed about the moment so many times: Feeling his arms around me, his body on mine. The man in my dreams hadn't had a face. But I had always

felt safe when I was with him. Happy and safe.

Before leaving to see Brent, I had wondered if he could be that guy. But now the vision of him as that man faded. My heart started racing as I stepped into the shower. I was angry at myself. How could I have misjudged someone so terribly? I backed up against the wall and slid down as the shower water mixed with my tears.

Sitting in my favorite sweatpants and my “no pain, no gain” sweatshirt, I placed my empty cup on the table, the taste of chocolate milk still lingering in my mouth. With a sigh, I lay back down on the couch.

It was ten minutes before two a.m. After starting a romantic movie, but then feeling so numb that I couldn’t enjoy it, I had decided to start a new series about a young guy who was bitten by a werewolf. I had bought the DVD set a few weeks ago because I believed a bit of action and adventure would help me relax from the stressful days at work. I never thought I would end up watching it to help me stop thinking about Brent.

I had watched four episodes in a row. It had been exciting and silly, but most of all, it had distracted me from thinking about Brent for a while.

Luna sat right next to me, purring as I stroked her thoughtlessly. I probably was better off going to bed, but since it was already Sunday, I didn’t care about getting my usual eight hours of sleep. I could sleep in.

I dreaded the dreams that would undoubtedly come. I was such a vivid dreamer, always had been. My mother had told me once how surprised she was that I could remember so many details about my dreams. But the ability to remember every detail had faded as I grew up. Probably because as soon as I woke up, I needed to get ready for school and, later on, for work.

I suppressed a yawn and looked at my television. The screen was still on the next episode. All I needed to do was click the play button. “Just one more then.”

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