RUN
HIDE
SEEK
THE FIRST BOOK IN THE TRILOGY
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The funny thing about losing your memory, if losing your memory can be considered funny at all, is that useless memories stick in your brain while the important stuff disappears. Important stuff like what your name is. Or where you live. Or what happened to make you lose your memory.

Chapter 1

Oh, I know that I am in Singapore, that I grew up in Singapore and have lived here all my life. I know that I am 15 years old, but can’t remember my birthday. I remember other stupid things like: I had parents and friends and that I was a student.

I remember what school was – sitting in class, boring lessons, and even more boring teachers. And TV shows I liked to watch. But I can’t remember who my parents were. Did I have brothers? Sisters? Who was my best friend? What school did I go to? Who were my teachers? I have no clue. For goodness sakes, why can’t I have forgotten about school?

The worst thing was, a little after I regained consciousness, I got a very strong feeling that there was something I was supposed to do. Something important, something big. But as hard as I tried, I could not remember what it was. I also found myself in a very strange situation, one that I knew could not be normal, even though I couldn’t quite remember what normal was...

But let me start from the beginning. This whole thing started two days ago.

Yes, I still remember how to count. And read a calendar. And tell the time.

It was December 2, 2037. It was a Wednesday morning...
I opened my eyes and found myself lying in a puddle of muddy water. I tried to stand up but fell back to the ground, gasping in pain. My eyes registered the devastation around me. Nothing was familiar. I couldn’t recognise anything.

“Mommy? Daddy...? Where am I...? What’s going on...?”

Yes, so you know. The first thing I did was call for my mother. A 15-year-old girl calling for her mama. Big deal. If you had seen what I did, you would have called for your mother too. Then I fainted.

The next time I opened my eyes, I’m guessing a few hours had passed. I was lying on an uncomfortable sofa. It smelled funny. Like a wet, smelly dog. It seemed that my memory loss didn’t affect my sense of smell. Too bad for me.

“Hey, guys, she’s awake!”

I found myself staring into a pair of green eyes belonging to a boy about my age or slightly older. He had longish brown hair and a nice face. Cute, I thought. He had a slight build but looked pretty strong. I noticed a bandage on his left arm stretching from his elbow all the way up to his shoulder.

“Are you okay, sweet pea?” he asked, his brows furrowing. I could see the concern in his unusually dark green eyes.

Sweet pea?

“Yeah,” I nodded uneasily. “I’m fine.”

“I’m Jae, who’re you?” The look of concern changed into a questioning one.
“I-I don’t know...” I stammered, feeling stupid.
Jae looked thoughtful. “Don’t know or don’t want us to know? I don’t blame you for being suspicious, with everything that is going on.”
I heard a whisper. “She looks suspicious. I don’t trust her.”
“How did she get here? Why haven’t we seen her around?” I heard someone else murmur.
Jae’s face hardened suddenly and his look turned into a glare. “Whatever. We’ll let you have some time to decide if you want to let us know who you are. Just know that you are safe with us.”
Safe from what? Again, there was that nagging feeling. I looked over his shoulder and saw heads nodding vigorously. There were about 15 boys and girls, all around my age or slightly younger, as far as I could tell. They looked like an odd bunch. Most of them looked a little worse for wear. Their clothes were dirty and they looked unwashed and untidy.
I glanced around. We seemed to be in the backyard of someone’s house.
The sofa I was lying on was under a shelter that jutted out from the back of the house. Beyond the shelter, there was a big garden. Quite impressive to have such a big garden in Singapore, I thought. But apart from mud and a line of pathetic dried-up palm trees, it was totally bare – no grass, no shrubs, no flowers, no chirping birds, nothing. It was utterly empty.
I heard someone whisper, “Quite pretty.”
I blushed. Jae must have seen me redden. He stiffened and glared at the boy. “Seriously?” he said.
Okaaay, then. I guess he thought I wasn’t pretty. Whatever. I changed my mind. He didn’t look so cute after all.
Jae frowned and looked at me from head to toe, a look of distaste on his face.
“Kyl,” he said, addressing a boy standing apart from the rest, “get her some clean clothes.”
I looked down at myself and blushed again, wrapping my arms around my chest. My T-shirt was filthy. And wet. Showing off everything! Argh. My jeans were so caked in mud I couldn’t bend my knees. I also saw that I was barefoot. My eyes travelled to the crowd of kids all gawking at me. I noticed that they were all barefoot too.
I looked at Jae’s feet. No shoes.
Had I just woken up in some weird alternate universe where no one wore shoes? Even though I had about a million and two questions whirling in my head, the foremost being – Dude, where are your shoes? – I decided to keep my mouth shut for the moment.
I was led into the back of the house and into a tiny stinking toilet to change. For the second time that day, I lamented that I hadn’t lost my sense of smell. The stench was incredibly bad.

Kyl had gotten me a T-shirt that was two sizes too big and a pair of jeans that fit okay — and by okay I really mean that they didn’t make my butt look big. Strange, isn’t it, how people obsess about trivial things, even in dire situations?

I looked around the filthy toilet. I really needed to pee, but the toilet was beyond gross. Streaks of grime ran down the inside — and outside — of the toilet bowl. I wrinkled my nose. I tried the flush. It didn’t work. Which explained the pail of water and the plastic scoop next to the toilet.

I sighed. If you gotta go, you gotta go. I peed, and then flushed it down with some water. I turned on the tap. No water. Sighing again, I scooped some water from the pail and washed my hands over the sink. What on earth was going on?

I took stock of the situation: I didn’t know who I was. I didn’t know where I was. I was stuck in a house with a bunch of weird kids who didn’t wear shoes. Maybe I was on that show that played stupid gags on unsuspecting victims. Maybe someone would jump out with a camera and say, “Ha, we got you!” But that wouldn’t explain how I couldn’t remember anything. Think! Think! Think! I told myself.
I looked into the streaky mirror and saw an unfamiliar face staring back at me. The face in the mirror was pretty. Whoever made that comment earlier was right. I didn't think I was being immodest. Considering that I was practically seeing my own face for the first time, I think I was being quite objective.

The face in the mirror had fair skin, a nice straight small nose, nice high cheekbones and long black hair that hung all the way down my back. Although, at the moment, it was tangled and streaked with mud.

But it was my eyes that caught my attention. They were big, clear and beautiful – and a deep shade of violet. Interesting, I thought, because it gave me a glimpse into who I was.

Now this I remembered – that in Singapore, parents could choose the colour of their child's hair and eyes (among other traits), even before their baby was born. But not everyone could afford such genetic manipulations, of course. Only the rich folks.

Which means, I must have come from a rather rich home.

As I thought about this, a memory suddenly flashed into my mind. I saw the devastation I had woken up to earlier that day. I saw the awful scene with an uncanny clarity. Where was memory loss when you needed it? I had woken up in the middle of a muddy patch on the side of a road in the middle of a Housing Board estate. It could have been Toa Payoh, or Yishun or Woodlands. All government flats kind of looked the same, didn't they?

Here was the awful part: the estate was in complete ruin. Some blocks of flats were burnt from top to bottom. Others were simply abandoned. There was no one about. And I mean no one, even though it was clearly day time. No pedestrians, no cars, no dogs barking. Just silence. The row of shophouses in front of me was thrashed – shutters were left open, glass doors and plate-glass windows were smashed. There was rubbish everywhere.

I felt my knees go weak at the memory. What had happened out there? I decided I had no choice. I had to trust Jae and Kyl and those kids, whoever they were. I took a deep breath – which I realised immediately was a stupid thing to do in a reeking toilet – and opened the door.