

***MEMENTO
NORA***

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BY ANGIE SMIBERT

Marshall Cavendish

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 Marshall Cavendish

To my mother, who always wanted to be a writer

Nothing to See Here

Therapeutic Statement *42-03282028-11*

Subject: *JAMES, NORA EMILY, 15*

Facility: *HAMILTON DETENTION CENTER TFC-42*

I'm about to forget everything I'm going to tell you. So I'm only going to mention the parts that matter. To you, at least. The rest I'm going to keep to myself, for my self. For that old Nora James. The obedient daughter. The popular girl. The oblivious consumer. The one who really owns this cute little charm bracelet with the silver purse dangling from it. The one you want to keep around.

It all started a few weeks ago. It was a glossy day. No school. Downtown was having a sale to celebrate two quiet weeks in a row. And Mom was in one of her good moods—her post-TFC mood—and generous with the credit. A very glossy day.

We bought strappy sandals at Macy's, a cute leather jacket at Bergdorf's, and ice cream, low-fat chocolate

mint, at Burkes. Then we were going to Fahrenheit Books for coffee and a new romance novel for Mom. We were doing our part to prime our feeble economy, as Dad likes to say, while the security patrol watched over us from their machine-gun nest atop Saks.

As we were walking down Market Street, there was a noise like a hundred Fourth of Julys. A body thudded onto the concrete about twenty feet in front of us. It rattled like a bag of bones as it hit the sidewalk. Mom turned me away, but not before I saw it was a man in a dark suit. Brooks Brothers, I think. He had no shoes on, just red socks; but he still had a book clutched in his hand, the hand with a silver watch on it. Burned paper fell from the sky and covered the sidewalk in a thick blanket of ash. Car alarms rang up and down the street. The air smelled like that bonfire we had last fall before Homecoming.

And that's when I noticed that the top of Fahrenheit Books, the history and classics section, had blown right off. I knew it was history and classics because of the charred books at my feet. *The Art of War*. *The Fall of the Roman Empire*. *Medieval Churches*. In the back of my nonglossy mind, I wondered which book had been the last thing imprinted on the dead guy's brain.

Security pointed their automatic weapons at us and herded everyone back into the stores. "Nothing to see here," they shouted. Then a black helicopter rose over Bergdorf's and swept down the block.

Everyone Knows About TFC

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That night I had the dream.

The body fell like a leaf in a rain of stinging ash. Mom covered my eyes, but I still heard it hit the pavement, still heard the bones rattle, still saw those red socks. This time I could see that his silver watch had stopped at ten past two. I couldn't make out the book title. Gray covered everything. I wiped and wiped, but nothing came clean. I was so not glossy.

Someone tousled my hair.

"Nora, wake up," Mom said quietly. "It's just a dream."

I shook my head. It felt real.

"Go back to sleep," Mom told me. "That memory will be gone by lunch tomorrow. And then we'll go shopping."

But I couldn't get back to sleep. The memory wouldn't