

REMEMBER ROSIE

BEVERLY SANFORD



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CHAPTER 1

It's definitely getting better, Lauren thought as she stacked her books in her locker. It had taken a while, but school was starting to feel easier. She even looked forward to it now, which was a far cry from her first few weeks at Brampton Academy.

“Hey – you survived double maths!” Sabrina’s voice cut in over Lauren’s shoulder. She turned around to see her friend opening her own locker.

“Only just!” Lauren said. She smiled shyly at Sabrina, whose sunny smile lit up her face. “I still think Mr Marks hates me, though.”

“He doesn’t like anyone,” Sabrina laughed. “But you’re getting on OK with the class, right?”

“I guess,” said Lauren. “But I still feel like the new girl.”

“It’ll wear off,” said Sabrina, slamming her locker shut. “I promise. And then you’ll feel like you’ve been here forever.”

Lauren really hoped Sabrina was right. Being the new girl was horrible. Nobody talked to you, teachers forgot your name, and you had to fend for yourself.

Her new street wasn’t much different – their neighbours hadn’t said more than a quick hello. Back home, everyone had known everyone else. Lauren and her friends had grown up together on the same street. They’d gone to school together, hung out in the park at weekends and grazed their knees playing football.

A pang of sadness hit Lauren and she leaned against her locker as a group of boys trampled past in their hurry to get out of school. Suddenly it all seemed a bit too much.

“Boys!” exclaimed Sabrina, noticing Lauren’s glum expression. “They’re always shoving about on their way to somewhere!” She tucked her arm into Lauren’s. “Let’s find Lexi and get out of here, yeah? I really need an ice cream. You look like you need one, too – maths is a total killer!”

Lauren was grateful. She knew Sabrina was trying to make her feel better. Sabrina and Lexi were the best things about Brampton Academy. They’d been best friends since nursery, but they still found room to let Lauren join in. She felt like a third wheel some of the time, but they always included her. Thanks to them, she’d started going out at weekends – just to the cinema or the café – and it felt great.

I just want to feel normal again, Lauren thought, letting Sabrina pull her outside.

“We NEED ice cream!” announced Sabrina at the top of her lungs to Lexi, who was waiting. “Seriously, Lex. We need to hit your mum up for a sundae before this place kills my mojo.”

“Tell me about it,” said Lexi. She tightened her dark ponytail and pulled a face. “I just sat through two hours of hearing about how they found King Richard’s body under a supermarket car park. I’ll have nightmares when I next go to ASDA!” Her eyes twinkled.

Lauren really liked Lexi. She was super smart and could cut you down with a single word. She talked really fast and sometimes Lauren couldn’t understand her broad accent. “But I don’t have an accent!” she’d protested when Lauren first asked her to repeat something. “You’re the one with the accent, Lauren.”

It stood out like a sore thumb, Lauren’s northern accent. And she’d quickly learned that Londoners used different words than she did. But they’d soon started having fun with it.

Sabrina and Lexi loved saying they were ‘mithered’ and, in turn, they’d taught her some London words, which amused her mum and dad. Like that time she’d told Mum they should go to

the shopping centre to ‘have a butcher’s’. Mum had been confused for hours until Lauren had explained.

Ice cream, though. There was nothing confusing about that. And a few hours hanging out with her friends at Lexi’s mum’s diner was perfect. “Lead the way to the mint chocolate chip!” she said, tucking her arm into Sabrina’s.

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“...I already said I was sorry,” Lauren mumbled, then she winced and held the phone away from her ear. She’d taken the call outside the diner.

“For goodness sake! I was worried sick! You know the rule – let me know if you’re going to be late home. I’ve been waiting for you to get in.” Her mum was furious.

“I just forgot... I’m sorry,” Lauren said. “It’s not a big deal, I’m with my friends.”

“Yes but I didn’t know that, did I?” her mother continued. “Anything could have happened. We have to be careful, in case you’ve forgotten.”

Lauren sighed. Of course she hadn’t forgotten. And if she did forget, her mother was right there to remind her every time she left the house. She couldn’t even go on the internet without being told to ‘be careful’.

When they’d first moved to London, Mum freaked out if Lauren stood too near the window or if a car pulled up outside. Things were calmer now, but Lauren knew that Mum never really relaxed. She always had one eye open, keeping watch.

“I haven’t forgotten. Look, I’ll be home by six, OK?” Lauren said, smiling as Lexi tapped on the window of the diner. Lauren gestured to the phone and rolled her eyes. Lexi rolled her own in silent understanding.

“No, I want you to come home right now!”

“But I said I was sorry. I’m just having an ice cream with Lexi and—”

“I said NOW, Lauren.”

Lauren’s stomach began to knot. She hadn’t heard Mum sound this angry for a long time. She felt bad then, for worrying her. She should have sent a text.

“I didn’t mean to worry you, Mum. I promise I’ll text you next time. But can I just stay out, please?”

Mum sighed. Then there was silence.

“Mum? Please?” Lauren was desperate not to have her afternoon ruined.

“I’ve told you to come home, Lauren. I’m not arguing about it.”

“But Mum,” Lauren wailed. “I only forgot to text you – why are you being so horrible?”

When Mum spoke, it was as though she was talking from really far away. “I’m not trying to be horrible. But I need you to come home. There’s been a letter. It’s about Harry.”

Lauren froze.

“Did you hear what I said? There’s a letter from Harry’s solicitor. The appeal – it’s worked. But I don’t want you to worry, OK? We’ll talk about it when you get home. OK?”

Lauren stood still, her fingers gripping the phone so tightly that her hand went numb. Her heart was pounding hard inside her chest, threatening to burst out. She couldn’t breathe.

“Lauren? Why aren’t you answering me?” Mum’s voice suddenly rang out of the phone, shocking Lauren back into reality.

“I’ll come home now,” she said numbly.

She barely heard as Mum hung up the phone. She looked through the diner window at Lexi

and Sabrina, who were busy watching something on Lexi's phone. For a second, she thought about telling them, about confiding in her friends.

“But you'd hate me if you knew,” she whispered towards the window. “I can't let you find out about Harry.”

She couldn't ever let them find out that her brother was a killer.