



Janet G. Sims

THE MAN
IN THE DARK SUIT

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Chapter I



She didn't hear the loud sirens bearing down on her as she lay with her face against the steering wheel of the car she'd been driving. Blood slowly trickled down her face and dripped into a small pool on the floor next to the gas pedal. Unconscious.

As she slowly opened her eyes, all she could see was a white fog. Her eyes focused, and she realized she was staring at white walls. She didn't know where she was and wondered how she'd ended up in this room, lying in this bed. Her head hurt, and she was confused. She tried to remember, but her mind was blank. Who am I, and where am I? she thought. She couldn't seem to answer these questions. Her heart beat faster and she began to panic as she realized she couldn't remember her own name, where she lived, or even if she had a family.

She was finally coming back to the world of the living. Though she didn't realize it, she'd been lying unconscious for three days after an accident she couldn't remember. In fact, she couldn't remember anything.

The door opened, and her heart beat even faster. A woman in a white uniform entered the room, and somehow she knew the woman in white was a nurse, and she began to relax again.

"Hi, sweetheart. How do you feel? I'm Robin, your nurse. We've been so worried about you."

Robin was a lady in her mid-thirties with long blond hair, which she kept up in a bun on the back of her head, tucked into her little white cap. Her blue eyes sparkled with love and kindness.

Robin explained that she was the nurse on duty in the emergency room when the woman had been brought to the hospital in an ambulance after a car accident three days earlier. The police had little information about what had caused the accident. A young couple returning home from a school dance had found her slumped over the steering wheel of the wrecked car, blood running down her face from hitting her head when the car struck the big oak tree after leaving the road.

She looked up at the nurse and smiled. "I don't really know how I feel. My head hurts and I don't remember anything," she answered.

"That's okay. Try to relax and don't worry. You need to rest to get better. Maybe then you'll start to remember again. I'll tell the doctor you're finally awake. Push the button if you need me."

She felt a little better now she had an answer about what was happening to her. She felt tired, even though she hadn't been awake long, and her eyes were starting to close when the door opened again and the doctor entered.

Her eyes focused on the man beside her bed. He was in his early thirties and very handsome, with dark brown hair with copper highlights that shone in the sunlight coming through the window. The light reflected in his dark brown eyes. His height and his broad shoulders made him appear very athletic. His perfect smile and gleaming white teeth made him even more handsome.

"Hello, pretty lady. I'm Dr. Ryan. I'm happy to see you've finally opened your eyes. How are you feeling? The nurse said your head was hurting. Do you want me to give you something

for your pain?”

“No. I think I’ll try to go back to sleep. I’m tired, and I just want to rest.”

“Okay, I’ll leave now and let you sleep. If you need anything, just let us know. The button is by your bed.”

The doctor left her room and she closed her eyes. She was asleep as soon as her eyes closed and immediately began to dream.

She was sitting on a couch reading a book in a room that felt comfortable and familiar. The doorbell rang, but she didn’t get up to answer the door. Someone else was there to greet the visitor, and she heard the door slowly open. A man’s voice invited the guest into the house, and then she heard another man’s voice answer, thanking the first man, the one who had opened the door. Both voices sounded familiar to her. Footsteps were coming closer to the room she was in, and she felt comfortable about seeing the man she knew was coming to see her. She could see his shadow entering the doorway. Then he was standing there, but she couldn’t see his face. The man then disappeared.

She woke up shaken. What had she been dreaming about? Where was she, and who was the man in her dream? Why couldn’t she remember? She lay for a little while thinking about it before she finally fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

Robin came into her room several times while she slept to make sure she was all right. She was resting well, and Robin didn’t want to disturb her. The poor girl needed to rest. The head injury she’d suffered in the accident was serious. It could be days or weeks before she’d start to remember her past. But Robin knew from experience that a patient suffering from amnesia couldn’t be rushed into remembering. Only time would tell when her memory would return, if ever.

She opened her eyes to a bright, sunny morning. The pain in her head had lessened, and she lifted her hand to the left side of

her head and felt a knot close to her temple and above her eye. No wonder my head hurts, she groaned to herself. “Ouch!” she cried out, feeling the pain in her shoulder as she tried to sit up. Just as she started to get out of bed, a nurse entered the room. It wasn’t Robin, the nurse she’d seen before, but a younger nurse.

Nancy Kimbles often rotated shifts with Robin. Her red hair and green eyes made her look Irish, but she was born and raised in Florida. Nancy was in her late twenties and was married, with two children, a boy and a girl.

“Where’s Robin?” she cried out. She’d felt safe with Robin.

“Hi, I’m Nancy Kimbles, your nurse this morning. What are you doing, young lady? You can’t get out of bed. It has been four days since you’ve been on your feet, and you’re still very weak. Robin went home late last night after she finished her shift. She’ll be back in later this morning. She had to pull a double because someone called out. How are you feeling this morning? Your doctor will be in to see you soon.”

“My doctor?” she asked. She could just barely remember talking to someone who had introduced himself as a doctor. Or had she just dreamed she had met him? She felt so lost. Maybe everything happening now was all a dream, and she’d wake up to find everything back to normal. But what was normal? She couldn’t remember.

“Dr. Ryan. He spoke to you yesterday when you first woke up. Your breakfast will be delivered soon, and if you’re able to tolerate it, the doctor will be able to remove the IV,” Nancy explained to her.

She looked down at her right hand, and there was the IV. She remembered that her hand had felt funny the day before when she woke up, but now she saw the IV tube. It seemed a little frightening to her how time seemed to be passing her by while she seemed to be standing still. Or, really, while she was lying down.

“I’ve come to help you with your bath. It will make you feel much better,” Nancy said.

After her bath, breakfast arrived. The candy striper brought her some strawberry yogurt, soft scrambled eggs, and a glass of orange juice. She tested the yogurt and liked the way it tasted. She finished it and started on the eggs. She must have been hungry because she ate everything on her plate. She was drinking her juice when Dr. Ryan walked into her room.

“Hello, pretty lady. How are you today?”

She recognized the man standing by her bed. Who could forget those dark brown eyes and the smile that lit up the room? She was glad she was able to remember something.

“I feel better, but my shoulder hurts when I try to use my arm.” She moved her right hand to her left shoulder. “I must have bumped it when I hit my head.”

“Does it hurt badly? Let me check it out.” Dr. Ryan examined her shoulder to see if there was any damage that needed his attention.

She explained to him that it wasn’t causing a lot of pain but felt more like a sprain. The doctor told her that if it didn’t get better soon he’d order x-rays. She agreed.

“I’ve been told you’re having a little trouble with your memory. Is there anything you remember at all? Like your name, where you live, or maybe where you were going before the tree stopped your car?”

“Ah, so it was a tree I hit. I figured it had to be something pretty big to cause this lump on my head,” she said, shaking her head to his question.

All she knew was that, yesterday, Robin was the name of her nurse, and today her nurse was Nancy. She also knew this man was Dr. Ryan. How strange this felt. She began to giggle to herself, which was followed by laughter. She ended with a good

cry. Dr. Ryan put his arms around her shoulders and let her cry. Afterward, he handed her a tissue to wipe her eyes.

“Do you feel better now? Is there anything I can do for you?”

“Yes, you can tell me your first name, since I don’t know my own. At least I’ll know yours, Robin’s, and Nancy’s.” She decided that, since she couldn’t remember any of her friends or family, she might as well start making new friends. They all seemed like nice people.

“My name is James. How do you do? Now, we have to figure out what we are going to call you, pretty lady. Do you have any ideas? Is there a name that pops into your head that you like? Or do you want us to have a contest to find a suitable name?”

She started to smile. James had a funny sense of humor, great personality, and good looks. She knew she was going to like this man. She wondered if her own personality was as likable. She suddenly realized she didn’t even know what she looked like.

“Oh, Dr. Ryan, is there a mirror in the room I can use? I can’t seem to remember my own face. What color are my eyes? I know my hair is brown, because I can see it. I hope I’m not ugly.”

“Calm down. Yes, I’ll get you a mirror, and no, you’re not ugly. I think you’re kind of cute. Very cute.” In fact, Dr. Ryan thought she was a very beautiful lady.

He found a mirror and handed it to her. She brought it up slowly in front of her face to see a young woman looking back at her. She had dark brown eyes, the same color as James’ eyes, and a creamy, smooth complexion that seemed to be pale at the moment, probably due to being ill. There was a big knot and bruise on the left side of her head above her eye that looked painful and a little ugly. Her lips parted to reveal perfectly even, white teeth. Everything she saw gave the impression of belonging to what the doctor referred to as “a kind of cute lady.”

Her age was a mystery, and could give her a good reason to say she was younger and get away with it.

Overall, she was relieved to see a face she could live with. It wasn't perfect, but with a little makeup, she could make it work. Nonetheless, it seemed to be hers, and she had to keep it.

"Well, what do you think? Was I right? Don't you agree that you're kind of cute? The only thing that looks ugly is that knot over your eye. But that will heal and go away soon. I hate to bring it up right now, but there are two men waiting to ask you a couple of questions about what happened the night of the accident. They know your situation, but they still need to ask some questions. They are from the police department. In fact, they were the first police officers to arrive at the scene of the accident. I'll tell them to come in, okay?"

"Okay, go get them."

James left the room. She knew she had to talk to the officers. Maybe they would know some information that would help her remember something from her past, or help her get her memory back. Maybe even her name.

Two men dressed in police uniforms came into the room. They introduced themselves as Officers Andy Thomas and John Richards. Both men were glad to see her awake and doing so much better. They knew her condition had been very critical the night of the accident.

"Hello. You're looking much better today. We were here yesterday, but the doctor told us you weren't able to talk to anyone yet." Andy Thomas was an older man, married, with two teenage children, a son and a daughter. His daughter was in high school, and his son was in junior high. This girl didn't look much older than his own daughter, and he felt compassion for her. She seemed to have no one to help her. No family members or any friends had come to the hospital to visit with her, and it

seemed she had no one to worry about her. Who was this girl, and where did she come from?

“Thank you for caring. I am feeling better. The doctor said you had some questions for me. I’ll try to answer them as well as I can, but I’m afraid I won’t be much help to you. I can’t seem to remember my own name. I was hoping you might be able to help me answer some questions of my own.”

“Okay, ma’am. The first question we have to ask you is, do you have any memory of being in the car you were driving?”

“That’s an easy one. No,” she shot back.

“We also need to know where you were going, and where were you coming from. The most important question is, do you know who the car belongs to?” John Richards asked. He was younger than Andy Thomas, married, and he had a baby girl who he loved dearly.

“I don’t know, I don’t know, and no,” she answered.

John explained that there had been no tags on the car when they pulled it back onto the road. In fact, most of the serial numbers had been scratched off. The car was an older model, an ’84 Grand Marquis, in very good shape. It must have been kept in a garage and only driven for special occasions. He went on to ask more questions. Did the car belong to her? He told her the car had been taken to the garage to be gone over to gather any clues that could answer some of these questions.

“No, I don’t know the answers to any of your questions. You said it was an older car? Was the color dark blue? For some reason that color flashed into my mind while you were describing the car. Could this be the beginning of my memory coming back?”

“Yes, the car was dark blue,” John told her. “Maybe you’re starting to remember, or that was a very good guess. Did anything else flash into your mind?”

“No. That was all I saw. What time of day did the accident

happen? Was it in the evening while the sun was going down? Wait a minute. I'm getting an image of being on a dark road with a lot of trees along the sides, like maybe a county road."

In her mind, she could see herself driving a car along the road she'd described, and she knew she was driving away from someone or something that scared her very much. But what was it she was running from? That was the question she needed an answer to, and as soon as possible. Someone could be out there waiting to cause her harm.

She told the officers of the fear she'd felt during the flash of images she had just experienced. They told her not to worry now because she was in a safe place, and that they wouldn't let anyone hurt her. She felt very tired and told the officers she needed to rest. They left, but not before they told her they would be back to see her another day.

Robin came in to check on her and she was glad to see a familiar face. She told Robin everything that had been discussed, and about the images she'd recalled. She also told her of the fear she'd felt during these recollections.

What did it all mean? Was she in danger from someone out there that she couldn't remember? Maybe she'd done something she should not have done. "Oh, Robin. Why can't I remember? My head is really hurting now."

"Sweetheart, you need to lay back down and relax. The answers will come in time. You've already started to remember. I'll get something for your pain."

After she took a pain pill, she began to get very sleepy. Her eyes had been closed for a short time when she began to dream again. She was sitting on that same couch, and in the doorway of the room stood a figure of a man dressed in an expensive, dark suit. She looked up into the man's face, but the face was blank, as if he had no face at all. But she wasn't afraid of the

man. She knew who the man was and why he was there to see her, and she somehow knew he was smiling at her. She smiled back at him, thinking how happy she was to see him. He started walking toward her, and she stood up to greet him. He spoke to her, saying something she couldn't quite understand. Then he took her hands in his and said, "You look so lovely tonight, J—"

Suddenly, she was awakened by a noise. A cleaning lady was in her bathroom and had dropped a bottle of disinfectant. The woman came into the room and noticed the patient was awake. She apologized for waking her up and left.

She had trouble going back to sleep, but soon managed to drift off. This time, she didn't dream.

When she woke, she turned her head and saw a distinguished looking man in a dark suit standing at the threshold of her hospital room. When he realized she was awake, he disappeared as if he didn't want to be seen by her. She didn't get a good look, nor did she recognize him. Since she only caught a quick glimpse, it made her wonder if he was real or if she'd imagined him. But something seemed very familiar about this man. Could it have been the man in her dreams? Maybe she hadn't been awake and had been dreaming again.

Lunch arrived. Since she'd done so well with breakfast, her IV was removed. She ate her lunch and really enjoyed it. She was improving so fast now that she'd be allowed to leave the hospital soon. But that was a big problem for her. Where was she going to go? Where was her home? And where would she get the money to take care of herself?

Dr. Ryan came in after lunch to check on her. "Hello, pretty lady. Hope your lunch was good. Sometimes the food here will surprise you. So, tell me. Did you come up with a name we can use for you? We really need a name to use on your files besides pretty lady."

“No, I haven’t. Sorry. But I had a dream that I was in a room and a man entered. He spoke to me. He started to say my name, or at least I think he was going to say my name. Except I woke up just as he said ‘J.’ So, I think my name might start with a J.”

“Let’s see. Jean is a pretty name. What do you think? I have some good news for you, Jean. I am releasing you from the hospital tomorrow. But from the look on your face, this is not good news. Why not?”

“Jean doesn’t sound right. Where am I going to go after I get released? I can’t remember where I came from, who I am, or even if I have any money to live on. What am I going to do? Where am I going to go? I don’t remember any family or friends. And no one came to claim me.”

“I’m sorry. I’ve been so worried about your condition that I didn’t think about all the problems you have to face when you’re released,” he replied.

Robin came into the room as she was explaining her problem to the doctor. Robin told her that her roommate, Melissa, had recently moved out to get married. She was hoping to find someone else to share her home, and told her she could come stay with her while she was recuperating. Maybe with time, her memory would return and she could have her life back again.

She was very grateful to Robin, but told her she had no money to pay rent. The only way she’d stay with her was if Robin would let her do something to pay her back, like maybe doing small jobs around the house. When she got stronger, she could find a job. She asked Robin if she was sure she wanted to do this, because she didn’t know anything about her. She hoped she was a good person.

“Yes, I’d love to have you come stay with me. I like to think I’m a good judge of people, and I’d say you’re a very nice young lady.”

“Well, problem solved, Jennifer,” said James. “Robin lives

close to the hospital, so I'll be able to stop in and check on your progress, if that's okay with both of you."

"Your name is Jennifer?" Robin asked.

"No. That isn't it, either," she protested. She told Robin the same story she'd told James. She didn't know how she knew those names were wrong, but she knew they were.

"How about Joan? That starts with a J. And I'd like it if you called me James. Do you think you could remember that name?"

She was glad he wanted to be her friend since she didn't seem to have many right now. "Joan is not my name, either, James. I'm sorry it's taking me so long to remember."

"That name isn't right, either? How about Jeanette? I like that name. I'm having fun playing this name game. Maybe if I keep trying, I might get it right. But we need to get you up on your feet now, and see if you're going to be strong enough to leave the hospital tomorrow. So come on, now; up on your feet. Robin will be on one side and I'll be on the other. Okay?"

"If you say so, James," she sighed.

She felt weak on her feet, but was able to make it down the hallway and back with the help of her new friends. She rested a while before she tried walking again. It felt good to be up, walking around on her own. She was a little shaky at first, but she was doing well.

The rest of the day went by slowly and without more images or memories coming back to her. She didn't have anything to pack up to take with her to Robin's house. She had no purse or ID with her when she was found. She only had the clothes she'd been wearing in the accident. Robin promised to take her clothes home with her to wash them that night. If they didn't come clean, since they were stained with blood, she said she'd bring back something of her own. She seemed to be the same size as Robin. Robin's old roommate, Melissa, who also wore

the same size as the two of them, had left a lot of her clothes behind in the rush to run off and get married. Robin hadn't given them away yet, and told her she could go through them and pick out what she wanted to keep.

She was starting to feel better now about leaving the hospital. She had a place to live, clothes to wear, and two new friends. Now all she needed was a job to make some money. She hated to think about how much the hospital bill would set her back. And repairs on the car she'd been driving were just too much for her to think about. She decided to make a list of all the questions in her mind that needed answers. She vowed she'd find the answers no matter how long it took.

Tired from everything that had happened that day, she went to sleep early. And she hoped the mystery man wouldn't return while she slept.

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