

MEMORY LOSS

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Jordon Jordon

The Missing Student

Grim Aftermath

The Cellar

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PART ONE

Chapter 1

Gregory Fallows started at infant school in Bradford in January 1954. He was two days short of his fifth birthday. Joining him on that day were the Quaid twins, Seth and Patricia. The two families lived about a quarter-mile apart and three times that distance from school. Gregory had a sister, Marie, who was two years behind him.

They attended the same church, Saint Martin's, and through the parish, the two groups came to know each other well — Tom and Nancy Quaid and Bill and Joan Fallows. Many were the occasions when the families would walk home together after the children's Sunday mass at 9.30am.

Having friends in the same class was a bonus in helping the children settle down early on, though Gregory and Patricia seemed to develop a particular affinity, despite the fact that she had a twin brother. They would play together in the large sloping school yard and would always be on the same side if they engaged in activities such as hide and seek or tag.

There was nothing untoward about it. They simply got on, though it was something that both were aware of even at such a young age. Not

for a moment did either seek to hide their friendship, while Seth couldn't care less.

Tom and Nancy noticed that their twins weren't especially close. It bemused them a little, since it was commonly reckoned that nine months development together in the same womb, normally created exceptional bonding and mutual instincts. The parents just put it down to one of those things.

"There are plenty of brothers and sisters who squabble and even fight when they are younger," reasoned Tom.

However, what both sets of parents didn't know was the way that Gregory and Patricia were consolidating their friendship even though they were only 5-years old. While a whole trail of families from St. Martin's could be seen walking home from school along the main Otley Road, the two little friends were to be seen chasing each other through the adjacent back-alleys and yards.

They were nearly always in sight of the parents, but, as they passed through the alleys, a very personal game began to unfold. It was as if the pair wanted to prove that they were best friends so, one day, when Gregory turned and said: "Show me your knickers!" Patricia obliged.

That was as far as it ever went. However, the thing was Patricia would never dream of revealing her underclothes to anyone else from school.

It was as if Gregory was special.

At their age, Gregory and Patricia had not the slightest concept about sex, but no doubt the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud would have had plenty to say about their playful activities.

This went on quite regularly over a full two years, which was the time the pair were together in infant class. When school circumstances altered, so too did everything else. After that period of time, all the boys and girls of St. Martin's were segregated into separate schools and thereafter, Gregory and Patricia no longer went home together.

They still saw each other when they played out in the street with several other children. But those peculiar, regular moments of intimacy no longer happened.

Patricia's relationship with her twin, Seth, was never a close one. In fact in many ways, she didn't like him. Her brother, for his part, couldn't care less about his sister. But for all that, there was a strange, almost telepathic bond between the pair.

One afternoon during the holidays, Patricia noticed that Seth was no longer around and hadn't been for quite a while. It was as if a sixth-sense was telling her that something was wrong and when she eventually ran indoors to tell her mum, she didn't say that her brother had vanished, instead she was quite emphatic:

"Something's happened to Seth," she declared.

Five minutes later, they found him in a neighbour's back yard with his head stuck inside some railings. He was quickly freed without any

hassle, but it was the significance of Patricia's unexplained awareness that caused puzzlement.

It didn't last long and over the weeks the incident was soon forgotten.

Chapter 2

By the time that Gregory — or Greg as he was becoming known to his friends — had reached the top junior class, he had already caught the eye of more than just his class teachers in St. Martin's as a really fine all-round sportsman.

He was first choice at every single sport that the school engaged in; he was tall for his age and a finely balanced and elegant runner. And while he was captain of the school football team, the city had a representative side which played two prestigious games against Leeds and Halifax respectively

The match against the first-named was always a particularly tough one and indeed, Bradford had a poor record overall against its neighbours. But not this year, as the team emerged emphatic winners by five goals, with Greg Fallows scoring four of them!

His name was all over the local papers in both cities. After all, it was almost unheard of for Bradford to win the match, let alone by such a margin. For good measure, that one player should do so well individually, was headline news in itself.

News soon emerged that Greg had passed the 11+ exam and would be attending St. Basil's Boys' Grammar School the following September. St. Martin's catchment area was a somewhat deprived one

and 11+ successes at eleven years were hardly commonplace. Mum and dad were very proud of their son.

Likewise however, were the Quaid family with the news that Patricia was also on her way to grammar school, in this case St. Jessica's College for Girls. However, there was also bitter disappointment with the news that her twin brother, Seth, had not been successful.

Deep down, it wasn't the biggest surprise in the world, since Seth's interest in classroom activities was minimal. In fact, even at just eleven years, the boy was already becoming something of a problem for his parents.

Twice Nancy had been called to school in relation to outrageous behaviour, on the second occasion after Seth had stolen dinner money from one of his classmates.

At the very end of term, the oldest junior pupils at the boys' school undertook a two-day residential. A large number of staff went along to ensure supervision was tight, but still Seth was a handful.

Back home, the two parents were chatting casually in the living room, when the conversation moved on to Seth. "I wonder if he's behaving!" commented Nancy to her husband. As she did so, Patricia's mind likewise moved to her brother.

"He's had an accident," she stated with not a little authority.

The two adults looked at their daughter and immediately scoffed.

"Don't be so silly," said Tom dismissively and Patricia shrugged her shoulders. She had no idea what led her to make such a statement.

About an hour later, there was a knock on the door. It was one of the neighbours whose telephone number the Quaid's had passed on to school in case of emergency.

"I've just received a message to say that Seth has had a fall at camp and it looks like he's broken a leg. Apparently, he's in hospital and in good hands. One of the teachers will be bringing him home tomorrow.

After they'd thanked the neighbour, Tom and Nancy looked at each other and then at Patricia. "How did you know that?" they asked almost in unison.

"I've got no idea," replied Patricia.

It was the truth.

###

September was like the start of a great new adventure for both Patricia and Greg at their new schools. Seth was also attending the local secondary modern school, but whereas the work ethic with both the first two was strong, as far as the last named was concerned, school was something to be merely tolerated.

Greg's work was high quality and he was placed in the top grade by his teachers. Equally his sporting prowess was getting him rave reports.

With regards to football, he was one of the rarities over the years, a boy picked for the under-13 XI when still in a lower age group.

Patricia meanwhile was the proverbial 'Miss Steady'. She worked diligently and rarely needed criticism in that respect.

The schools were about a mile apart, with the girls' school finishing fifteen minutes after the boys. There were always long queues for the bus outside St. Basil's and at an early stage Greg decided to walk instead to catch one which, a couple of stops earlier, would have passed the girls' college.

It was sheer expediency on his part, but one day, he went upstairs on a bus which was full of girls wearing the well-known St. Jessica's uniform. And there, sitting amongst them all, was Patricia. As he sat down and she saw him, straight away she swapped seats to be next to him. They had so much to tell each other since, in the evenings, they both had lots of homework and rarely went out to join their friends.

They alighted the bus together, the stop being close to their old junior schools. They walked up Otley Road and chatted away with no inhibitions. After all, they'd been friends for a long time.

As they passed one side-street, they both glanced sideways at the backs of the houses where they used to run as infants.

Suddenly, Greg roared out laughing. "Show me your knickers," he cried.

Patricia's eyes opened wide with astonishment and then she recognised the joke. She thumped him playfully in the chest and they laughed liberally together.

It was almost like a watershed moment. They were too young to understand specifically the psychology of it all, but they knew it was all about their friendship.

"Let's do this every night after school," suggested Greg, and without hesitation, Patricia agreed. From that moment on, they would both catch the same bus.

And so the pair became almost inseparable each afternoon after school. Patricia's friends even gave up their seat to accommodate Greg and began to talk of him as Patricia's boy-friend. His pals didn't know of the arrangement, but since he was such an athletic icon, they'd never dare to ridicule him anyway.

Not that there was anything physical about it; they were both still short of twelve, but as friendships went, this was a true one. As the weeks and months passed, the arrangement became set in stone and they'd be seen night after night walking home together like a brother and sister.

Anyone who didn't know them, might have thought that Greg and Patricia were the twins!

In contrast, the relationship between the real brother and sister was virtually non-existent. They were on entirely different wavelengths and

their parents were desperately struggling to keep Seth under control. He was out so often that, thankfully, he didn't impact on Patricia's need for peace and quiet as she did her homework. He always seemed out of the house and indeed, there was even the ignominy of a visit from the police to be overcome, when Seth was witnessed by the neighbours being led on either side by two PCs.

Bill and Joan were ashamed and mum burst out crying when the officers told her the trouble Seth was causing with regular breaches of the peace. They tried to gate him, but he simply ignored them both and ran out.

###

By the time the three youngsters were into third year secondary, Seth had already been up in juvenile court twice and Bill and Joan had been forced to cough-up hefty fines. Their son remained unmoved, even at the sight of his mum's distress and then it came to a crunch when Bill laid into his son physically. To his shock, Seth punched him back!

After that, the relationship between parents and son was shattered. It was a point of no return!

The contrast with Patricia couldn't have been more marked and, every afternoon, she and her friend Greg would catch the bus before walking the last mile home together. Their relationship was instinctive and the two never gave it a second thought until something happened to change things completely.

It was Christmas time and Patricia had arrived at the Fallows' house to give Greg a present. It was nothing more than a box of chocolates but the thought was everything. They laughed when they realised that the reciprocation was an identical gift!

As they stood alone in the hallway, Greg playfully lifted a small piece of mistletoe which was lying on a chair. He laughed and placed it above Patricia's head and was ready to give her a playful kiss as a simple way of saying thank-you.

Their lips were meant to smack but somehow they lingered that extra second and the impact of both of them was instant. Patricia took the lead and put both her hands on either side of Greg's face. This time the kiss lasted longer.

The two of them looked at each other, laughing nervously before Patricia left and trotted off home, leaving her friend standing motionless in the hallway.

What in the world had just happened?

As he turned, Greg became aware of a pair of eyes gazing at him from the top of the stairs. Sitting there, looking down, was his 10 year old sister Marie. She had a broad grin on her face.

"Do you love Patricia?" she asked directly. "You should, because she's lovely and I like her. You should marry her!"

Chapter 3

Greg chased up the stairs after his young sister. He was laughing while she was screaming. When he caught her, he tickled her and she couldn't stop giggling.

"Don't you dare tell anyone," ordered Greg. "Least of all mum and dad!"

The weather was pretty bad over that Christmas holiday period, so none of the local youngsters were out playing. Except Seth, of course, who only seemed to be at home when he was sleeping or wanting feeding.

One day, when he came in, Tom could pick up the odour of cigarettes on him. It was easy to sense, since nobody else smoked in the Quaid household.

Back at school, Greg made the end-of-day walk to the bus stop in customary fashion, but this time with a slight sense of angst. What had happened under the mistletoe and should they have kissed like that?

He determined to play it casually, but the moment he ran upstairs on the bus, Patricia was turning her head in expectancy. They were next to each other on aisle seats and their knees touched as they faced each other. There was also something that bit different about their communications this time. Straight away, they were conscious of eye-

contact; it was probably no different than it had ever been, but the awareness certainly was.

As they got off and began the walk up Otley Road, Patricia took the lead. She was leaning in towards Greg and on several occasions, hooked her arm inside his, though carefully making sure it wasn't lasting and that they weren't seen linking by any friends or neighbours.

As they finally parted company, Greg found it impossible not to notice the affection on Patricia's face. And he had to admit he was enjoying the attention. He was fourteen, albeit nearly fifteen, and he had a girl friend.

As each day passed, the togetherness on the way home became such that they regularly held hands; occasionally there was even a surreptitious kiss.

All was going well, that is, until one day as they were walking up the road occasionally embracing, they heard running behind them and there, all breathless, was Greg's sister Marie. She was now eleven and hoped to follow in Patricia's footsteps by transferring to St. Jessica's by passing her 11+ exam.

"Caught you both!" she shouted almost gleefully. "Holding hands, eh — must be serious!"

Greg was mortified at being caught, not least by his sister, but Patricia was far more pragmatic and had come to a stage where she didn't care if people noticed. She was proud of her boy-friend.

For the rest of the way, the trio walked home together, but there was no parting kiss! Marie saw to that!

###

The boy-girl relationship went from strength to strength, to the point where both sets of parents accepted it as normal. The warmth that passed between them was now bordering on intimacy, though full-blown sex was not something to readily indulge in at such a young age. It was, after all, only the mid-1960s.

Greg's sporting ability was now being channelled increasingly towards football, even though he was still school champion at several other sports in his year group. He was the captain of the City schoolboys' team and a regular goal-scorer, even at that elevated level. What's more, scouts from many of the local professional clubs had come knocking at his home to speak to his parents.

He was leaning towards an apprenticeship with Huddersfield, that is, if he was to take that route at all. Footballers weren't that well paid and his vocation towards a teaching career had always held a great sway in his thoughts.

Still, having talked to his dad, he decided to train as a schoolboy with Huddersfield and just see how it went. It did mean however, that on one evening a week, he didn't meet up with Patricia. That said, if any of her friends asked where Greg was when he failed to catch the bus, she very proudly pointed out that he was training with Huddersfield Town.

Now, that did impress them!

Marie, meanwhile, was successful in passing the 11+ and she took her place at St. Jessica's. She even caught the same bus as Greg and Patricia and walked home with them. By now, she was well used to them holding hands.

Her relationship with them was healthy and she knew when to hold her tongue if there was a secret that parents weren't to know about. She was learning at a young age about teenage discretion.

Both Patricia and Greg did really well in their GCEs and were quite happy to proceed to sixth form. And still, they followed the time-honoured journey home, though, increasingly, Marie was inclined to meet up with some of her own friends. That provided the opportunity for the other two to detour around town and do some browsing in the city centre stores.

The intimacy which passed between the couple increased quite naturally. They were both well aware of bodily contact, but one warm and sunny day they'd taken a walk to the local park and were lying down in a very discreet grassy corner which was camouflaged by bushes.

They were alone with only the tweeting of the birds for company. It was a romantic setting by any stretch of the imagination—even for two teenagers. Both had on light tops and shorts which befitted the warm day and as they lay there, bare legs became instinctively intertwined and Patricia started a gentle swaying across Greg's thighs.

She began to moan gently and with the realisation of how much she was enjoying the movement, Greg was suddenly out of control. He was an accident waiting to happen and the explosion which followed was as enormous as the embarrassment.

He was instantly ashamed, but while his personal macho-image rating went to zero in seconds, Patricia grabbed his arms tightly and reassured him.

"If I did that to you, I'm glad," she whispered. "Please don't be ashamed. It makes me feel that you are mine and I am yours."

Thereafter, there was no turning back and the inevitable consummation followed when, a couple of days later, they revisited the same nook in the park. The ensuing excitement was beyond words and they walked home laughing and joking and ready to do the same thing all over again...and often!

When Patricia arrived home, mum Nancy recognised the mood-change instantly. Her daughter was flushed and there was a spring in her step. Mothers spot such things.

There was nobody else around and Nancy immediately called for a confidential sit-in. It lasted quite some time, but if Patricia was initially apprehensive at the thought of a maternal lecture, she was wide of the mark.

Later that same evening, Nancy told Tom of the day's events:

"Our daughter became a woman today," she told him in a matter-of-fact way. "And she and I have had a long chat about safeguards and she's taken everything on board. It was bound to happen at some stage and I don't know about you, Tom, but I'm so glad she's in a proper relationship and with such a nice lad as Greg."

Nancy wasn't sure how Tom would react initially — dads and daughters and all that — but she was pleasantly surprised how well he took it.

The middle-aged couple sat together on the settee and cuddled for a little while, at the same time reminiscing about the day that the twins came into the world; then pausing to express disquiet at how different the two turned out from each other.

###

Greg sauntered into his house to find only himself in. He went upstairs and lay on the bed staring at the ceiling and thinking how nothing could ever be the same again.

His relationship with Patricia had evolved so slowly and naturally and the initial experience of full-sex had fitted almost routinely into the whole sequence of time.

He recalled the afternoon in the park and tried to come to terms with his subsequent feelings. After a few minutes he'd concluded that he could never have got a girl so lovely and tender had he written down on paper all the things he might ask for in a relationship.

As for the sex, that was superb. In fact, he realised he was ready to set off for her house there and then for some more — until he realised her parents would probably be in. He certainly couldn't wait to be alone with Patricia again. And birth-control — what was that?

Just then, he heard the front door open and close with Marie chattering away to her mum. He went downstairs to join them but first addressed his attire to make sure nothing would give away the afternoon's activities.

"Did you have a nice afternoon with Patricia?" asked Joan.

"Yes, it was such a nice day, we had a stroll in the park," he replied.

At which he noticed Marie turn away giggling.

"What was that supposed to mean?" he asked himself with a typical adolescent feeling of guilt.

###

On Sunday, both the Quaid and Fallows families walked home together from Mass as they so often did. At one point, the two mums became a tad isolated, so Nancy took the opportunity to bring Joan up to date:

"Our two babies are fully-fledged adults as of their visit to the park," she told her friend. "I could tell the moment Patricia arrived home, so I took the opportunity to spell out safeguarding and I took her to the doctor the next day to sort out the pill."

"I want you to know, Joan, that Tom and I fully approve of Greg. Our daughter could not have met anybody nicer."

Joan Fallows was clearly caught by surprise. She even felt guilty at never really giving that much thought to the situation, especially since it had been staring her in the face.

She also reflected on how quickly her own daughter Marie was growing up and she wondered if she had begun taking a closer interest in boys. What were the implications for her as a mother?

###

As Greg and Patricia's time in sixth form raced by, decisions on their respective futures were increasingly of paramount importance. They spent some time talking things through with their careers' teachers and ultimately were coming to conclusions.

Greg was leaning towards Headingley Teacher-Training College in Leeds, one which had only recently opened. Patricia however, having given some thought to a similar career, wanted to keep her options open and decided on a university place in Manchester.

When the pair talked it through together, there was a great deal of soul-searching, not least over whether they should go to the same place in order to be together.

However, they decided their love would be strong enough to see them through the three years and they'd have loads of time together during the holiday periods.

There would be plenty of other students in the same situation and besides, what was to stop them coming home at weekends?

Chapter 4

During the Autumn term, both Greg and Patricia had provisional interviews for their respective higher education choices and not long afterwards, they received verification, on condition of acceptable A-level results.

Both were confident that the requirements were well within reach.

Patricia's brother Seth was now the proverbial tearaway. He came and went as he pleased despite his parents' protestations. In effect, he was out of control, yet both Tom and Nancy maintained a pretence of effective parenthood in the hope that a miracle would happen and he would emerge a reformed character as he got older.

Just about everyone knew such a scenario was a remote possibility.

One evening, Marie found she needed a pad of lined notepaper, after she'd unexpectedly run out of stock. "Ted's in the main road stays open and he sells them," she told her parents. They were both immediately guarded, but straight away, Greg offered to take his sister.

They had just emerged from Ted's shop and turned into the nearby side-street on the way back, when a large, sporty Ford Capri came speeding along and screeched to a halt next to them. Seth, Patricia's brother, was at the driving wheel with another lad, whose face Greg was unable to see, next to him.

"So what do you think about our brand new Capri, Greg?" shouted Seth through the wound-down window. "It's got the latest automatic gears!" He was clearly looking for some commendation for stealing it.

"Not impressed," said Greg with disdain. "Come on Marie, let's go!"

"Suit yourself," called Seth revving the engine noisily.

The Capri had stopped just a few yards in front of a parked car and Greg and his sister started to cross the road in that space between. Seth was revving the Capri's engine like fury, but, when he was set to roar off, he'd somehow contrived to put the car into reverse gear.

The car screeched backwards sending both Greg and Marie hurtling into the parked car and then pinning them there. Seeing what he'd done, Seth didn't wait a moment longer and was tearing away before anyone emerged to discover what had happened.

Both brother and sister were lying in a terrible state on the ground in front of the motor they'd been squashed against. Moments later, doors opened and, realising the situation, people phoned 999 and both police and ambulance were on the scene in no time.

Unfortunately, nothing could be done to save Marie, while Greg was despatched to Bradford Royal Infirmary with sirens blaring.

###

When Greg came round, his parents were at his bedside along with Patricia. A police officer was just outside the ward, clearly wanting to get a full resumé of the incident from the patient.

Greg looked at all the people gazing at him. They meant nothing to him; he didn't recognise a single one, though he did notice that the woman closest had almost raw eyes with tears rolling continuously down her equally red cheeks.

As Joan Fallows gradually became aware of her son's lack of response, and realised he wasn't recognising her, she began sobbing and blubbering something about losing her daughter. Patricia came over and held his hand. Greg was fully awake and even alert, but her face was also that of a stranger.

As he looked past Patricia, he could see that Joan was now in the arms of a man he assumed was her husband. What was this all about?

Soon the doctor was with them, explaining that Greg had suffered severe concussion, as well as some ligament damage to his knee, which was in a heavy strapping. Otherwise he was fine.

However, when the situation was explained about the patient's memory loss, he indicated he would do some more tests immediately.

As everyone waited the results, this latest development, on top of the loss of Marie, was testing their resolve to the limit. Joan was so upset as to be near convulsion and Patricia was holding on to her and

stroking her back. Bill, meanwhile, was gazing into space. His expression was that of a zombie!

The waiting was agony but eventually, the doctor returned. He could not find anything fundamentally wrong with Greg and his only positive note, regarding the loss of memory, was that it could return in hours, days, or months, but, against that, it might last years.

"We know so little about these things," he told the waiting group, while Greg was sitting up in bed totally confused. Who were these people?

The doctor handed a small card to Bill and Joan. "This is the name of a specialist who's based here. Perhaps you'd like to make an appointment to see him should there be no immediate signs of improvement," he told them.

As Greg sat in the car with his parents and next to Patricia, he couldn't figure anything out. His apparent girl friend was squeezing his hand and stroking it persistently. It felt nice, but he had no memory of her.

They arrived home and Greg got out and walked indoors. Without a word, he walked straight up the staircase to his room. The others looked aghast.

Bill followed him up the stairs and sat down on the bed with his son.

"How did you know to go to this room?" he asked.

"Because it's mine," came the reply. "This is where I live!"

He pointed to his desk and the piles of books. "This is all my work," he added.

Bill didn't know what to say and decided that he would try telling him the terrible news. "Your sister Marie is dead," he said bluntly.

Greg looked at his father. "I don't remember her," he replied.

Then he was asked if he remembered an incident involving a car. There was a pause as Greg was clearly trying to recap.

"I can recall a black car but that's about it," he said. "Is that why I was in hospital?"

Tom tried every manner of means to trigger some sort of response, including pointing out who his parents were and not least Patricia. However, what was emerging was the craziest of situations. Greg was able to take on board all manner of things, but he'd lost total recall of people and faces.

Were it not so serious it would be laughable.