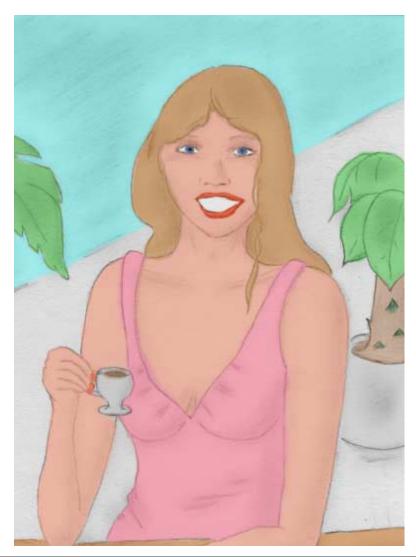


MEMORIES

Briana Vermont



An 'ADULT TV' E-BOOK

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Reluctant Press TG Publishers

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Memories

By Briana Vermont

Illustrations by David McKinley

Chapter 1

"Run."

Just one word, but it wakes me from a sound sleep, into a cold sweat. Just one word, only a dream, but it was the most frightening dream of my life. I lie in bed, playing it around in my head, pretending to analyze it. Run? Run where? Run from, or to? Run from, I assume, for no good reason other than it seemed like that kind of a dream.

Just one word. Nothing before it – nothing that I can remember, anyway. And I woke too quickly for anything to follow. Spoken quietly, almost a whisper, really. But commanding, implying all that would happen if I didn't do as instructed.

It wasn't the word. Not just the word, anyway. It was also the eyes. The eyes, looking directly into mine, the fear they held as they spoke that one word, "Run." Fear for me? Yes, but fear for the speaker as well. Was there anything else, any other clue? No, just the word. And the eyes.

Yes, I'm pretending to analyze the dream. There isn't enough to analyze – certainly nothing to hold me here for this length of time. The truth is, I'm afraid to open my eyes.

Silly, to be so afraid. Frightened by a dream, a fragment of a dream really. A fragment too short to be considered a thought, much less anything as grandiose as a dream. Ridiculous.

Relegating childish thoughts to those places where such things belong, I push past the dream and, determined to get on with my day and all the important business it would present, I open my eyes...

To utter confusion. This is not my bedroom! Confusion turns to shock as I realize, I'm lying in an alley. Curled up behind a dumpster, lying in trash and who knows what else, afraid of a stupid dream when I'm alone in the dark, exposed and vulnerable, possibly miles from my...

From my, what? What was I about to say? My home? I can't picture a home. A house? Apartment? Nothing, I can't remember where I live. I need to find a phone, call...

I have no idea. Friends? Family? Who do I call, I can't remember! I can't remember a name, a face, a number, anything!

Who am I? I have a name; I know I have a name! I have a life, somewhere, not here, anywhere but here. I stand, and start to run, run from the dumpster, from the alley, from the garbage and roaches and piss...

A block away I stop running. I'm trying to run back, back to my life, but I don't know where that is. I can only run from, and I can't even remember what it is I'm running from. I know now that I've already run from, and not just from the alley. Something before the alley, something worse. I ran to the alley, from the other. The alley was once a beautiful, safe oasis that I ran to. I need to slow down.

I walk the streets. It's late at night, and I see almost no one. I reach a main street, and a few cars drive by, the occupants going about their lives. I envy them; having lives, somewhere to go, out of the cold.

I realize I'm cold. I'm wearing only jeans and a dark T-shirt, and it's cold enough to see my breath. I scan the street for anything that might be open at this hour. There's a light coming from a window nearby. I approach, and try the door. It opens, so I enter, noting the low sounds of the late-night pub. Quiet conversations from the few customers, glasses hitting wooden tables. I walk up to the bar and sit down, happy to be doing something normal, something, familiar? Normal, anyway.

"You can't stay here," says the bartender, an old relic who probably hates anyone who hasn't been a regular for twenty years. "If you want to stay, you better be ordering something, kid."

Kid? How old am I, anyway? Like everything else about my life, I have no idea. Of course, anyone under forty is probably a kid to this old fossil.

"So?" he questions. "You ordering? And you better show me some money first, if you expect to see a drink." I pat my pockets, looking for – anything. Except they're as empty as the rest of my life.

"Hey!" A man suddenly sits on the stool beside me, startling me. I didn't even hear him come up. "No need to be like that, Collin. Set us up with two beers, I'm buying."

Collin? The bartender doesn't look like a Collin. He looks less like a Collin than anyone I know. Which, right now, is nobody. So okay, I guess he can be Collin.

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"I want to see some ID," says Collin, glaring at me. ID? How old am I? I look at my smooth hands, my nearly hairless arms. Maybe I am a kid! But no, I can't be, I mean, I feel older than that. Collin is waiting, so I pat down my pockets a second time. Still empty.

"Collin," the man rebukes him. "Stop being unfriendly. Two beers, come on now."

Collin pulls the beers, glaring at me the entire time, finally putting them on the bar in front of us. He eventually stops glaring, but only, it seems, because he's beginning to feel self-conscious. He looks around the bar as if I'm a glare-magnet he's trying to pull away from.

"Come on, let's find a table," says the man as he sets down a fiver. He picks up the two beers and leads me away from the bar, away from Collin's disapproval.

I sit at the table. The man places the beers on the table, then sits across from me. He just looks at me, saying nothing. I pick up my beer and drink.

The man picks up his beer, but before he drinks he says, "So, you got a name?"

A simple question, but it startles me. I watch as he drinks, watch him watching me. I swallow to clear my throat and answer, "Not really."

He looks at me as if he approves. "Smart," he says. "Names can lead to trouble. Better off without them, maybe not always, but sometimes."

He takes another drink, looking at me. "I have a name, but you can call me John," he says. I nod at him, take another drink. I'm too tired, too disoriented to talk. Fortunately John doesn't want to talk, so we drink quietly at our table.

He's older than me, much older. Maybe thirty, or thirty-five. I guess I'm starting to buy into the idea that I really am just a kid. Not a bad looking guy, still with most of his hair. Might have been an athlete when he was younger, but out of shape now, the effects of a hard life showing. He catches me looking at him, so I look down at my beer instead.

We sit like this for another twenty minutes, maybe half an hour. I can tell he's watching me, although I keep my head down, don't look back. Collin shoots his looks of disapproval, but brings two more beers when John asks, accepts the payment. It's warm in here, and I'm so tired. I think I may have fallen asleep a couple of times.

As I'm getting close to the end of my second drink John asks, "You have somewhere to stay tonight?"

I swirl the beer in the bottom of my glass, watch as it picks up the foam from the sides, draws it down into the liquid at the bottom. I shake my head.

"Come on then," he says. He finishes his beer and stands, shrugs into his coat as he heads for the door, walks out into the night. I stand and follow, leaving the last of my beer on the table. There's nothing but foam left, anyway.

John crosses the road and I follow. He leads me for three or four blocks. I try to walk beside him, but his strides are much longer than mine so I end up walking behind, doing a quick run to catch up every once in a while. Eventually we arrive at a three-story apartment building. He unlocks the front door, leads me to a first-floor apartment and opens the door for me.

The apartment is small, but nicely furnished. The front door opens directly into the living room where he has a TV, a couple chairs, and a couch where I expect I'll be sleeping. John takes off his coat, hangs it in the closet, and I head straight for the couch.

"Wait a minute," he says, and I stop myself from sitting. He's looking through the closet, through the jumbled mess of items on the floor. He finds a cardboard box, pulls it out, hands it to me.

"You'll find something you can wear in here."

He points me in the direction of the bathroom, so I enter with the box, closing the door behind me. I set the box on the counter, unfold the lid and look inside.

I look inside.

I look in the box.

I...

There is very little in the box, but what there is, is mostly, women's clothing. A colorful skirt, a cute T-shirt, some mismatched socks, a purple slip. I pull the items out, push them around, looking for anything he might have meant for me to wear, but there is nothing. I close the box and look up, catching my reflection in the bathroom mirror.

Oh.

Oh, this is embarrassing. All this time, and I had no idea. No idea that I am, in fact, a girl. I look at my reflection, and my cheeks begin to burn red.

I study my reddened face. Soft eyes, pouting lips. Nicely shaped eyebrows, high forehead. Cute, turned-up nose. Traces of eyeshadow and mascara. Very cute, very pretty, but completely unknown to me. I must have looked at this face every day of my life, but it's a complete stranger staring back at me.

There's a band holding my hair in place behind my head. I reach around and pull it out. Long, thick, blond-brown hair falls over my shoulders. I stare at the girl, me, looking for anything familiar.

At least I know now, I'm not a kid. The girl must be – I must be around twenty.

John must be wondering what's taking so long. I put the box on the floor, pull out the purple slip, and hang it on a hook set in the door.

I pull my T-shirt up, but catch sight of myself in the mirror as it pulls out of my jeans. I stop, and look at the gap, my flat, smooth stomach. Slowly I lift the shirt, watching, noting the curve of my waist, the way my navel moves in and out with each breath. I lift the shirt over my head, then look back to the mirror in time to see my hair shake out, fall over my soft, narrow shoulders. I drop the shirt to the bathroom floor.

I stare at the mirror, and continue my strange, private striptease.

I step on the heels of my running shoes, pulling them off without undoing the laces, kick them away. Then I undo the top button of my jeans, making a small v, exposing more of my belly. As I unzip the jeans, the v widens, exposing more flesh, until the flesh ends at a line created by my white cotton panties. I have to wiggle in order to work the jeans over

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the curve of my hips, then step free, leaving the jeans in a heap on the floor. I never look away from the girl in the mirror.

Looking in the mirror, at my tight, young body, wearing only a white bra and panties, I note that I have some serious curves. I watch as I reach up behind my back, attempt to undo my bra. I wanted to see it fall loose, slip down over those shoulders, except I can't get the hooks undone. After a couple frustrating minutes I finally pull down the shoulder straps, shrugging my arms out gracelessly, then spin the bra back-to-front, finding the hooks and undoing them. I hang the bra on the doorknob, and look back to the mirror.

. . .

I...

. . .

I watch myself, in the mirror. I try to stand perfectly still, except I sway, slowly, gently, and...

..

My breasts are perfect. Amazing. Full, rounded, soft and smooth, nipples pointed slightly upward...

I...

I tear my eyes from the mirror. Grab the slip off the door, find the opening at the bottom, pull it down over my head. My arms slide under the spaghetti straps, and the satiny material slides down over my body. I pull my hair through, shaking it out so it falls down my back, frames my face as I look back to the mirror...

• • •

The material clings to my body, emphasizing my slim waist, round hips, even rounder breasts. My nipples poke through, creating tiny bumps, puckering the material, pointed slightly upward...

With a conscious effort I pull away from the mirror, breaking



the spell. I reach up under the slip, slide my panties down, wiggling my hips to get them over the curves. They fall to the floor around my ankles, and I kick them off. I sit down, pee, wipe myself, wash my hands. I open the bathroom door and step out.

John is waiting for me, wearing just his jeans, his shirt lost somewhere in the apartment. He holds me by my shoulders, slides one large, strong hand up, under my hair, around the back of my neck, his thumb gently touches my ear. I tilt my head back into his hand, close my eyes, let him take hold of me, take care of me. His mouth on mine, somehow we're in the bedroom, I'm lifted like a doll into the bed. A bristly cheek scrapes my soft skin, against my face, then my neck, now between my breasts. The slip comes up and over my head, I pull his head to my chest, feel his face scrape my breasts as he moves his mouth with agonizing, delicious slowness to my nipples.

One rough, weathered hand cups a breast, tweaking one nipple with thumb and fore-finger as he gently tongues the other, sending electric shocks to a point between my legs, deep inside of me. I grab his chest, massaging, pinching, coaxing him to move up on top of me, but he only switches breasts, driving me out of my mind.

I grab him between the legs, guide him to me, find the place, feel him glide smoothly inside, an itch that needed scratching for so long. His mouth on mine, one arm beneath my head, the other still massaging my breast, pinching me painfully, delightfully, rubbing me in just the right way with each twisting motion of his hips until I explode...

* * *

The next morning I'm lying in bed, John's bed. John is snuggled up behind me, one arm wrapped over my waist. I feel his slow, deep breath as he sleeps. It's a comfortable arrangement, safe, warm, and I wish it could last.

I fell asleep quickly last night, but only slept for a few hours. The clock read 5:30 when I woke; that was over an hour ago. Frustratingly, no memories have come back to me. So for over an hour I've lain here, racking my memory, going over what little I know.

Which is very little. The only thing I really know for sure is that while I'm here I feel safe, and warm. But no longer comfortable. I've been still for too long, trying to let John sleep. Slowly, carefully I slide forward, away to the edge of the bed. Even in his sleep he seems to understand, and he rolls over in the opposite direction. I stand and look back, to make sure he settles back to sleep. He does.

I leave the bedroom quickly, quietly, closing the door behind me to keep out any noise I might make. I go to the bathroom, closing the door behind me. It looks the same as it did last night, the box of clothes taking up much of the floor, the filthy jeans and T-shirt tossed in the corner, my white bra hanging from the doorknob. The girl with the long, blondbrown hair is still standing on the other side of the mirror, watching me.

I look at her face – my face – closely, hoping for any sign of recognition, but there is nothing familiar. I notice there's a scar on my left eyelid. Healed over long ago, nothing that anyone would ever notice, especially with a little makeup. But still, a scar on my eye. It must have been painful, and frightening. Blood dripping down my face, afraid I may have lost my sight, destroyed my looks, a doctor making tiny, careful stitches to my eyelid. Except, I don't remember any of this. I know it happened, the evidence is in front of my

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face. The evidence is my face. How can anyone forget something like that? Why can't I remember?

I kneel down beside the tub, run the water. It takes a long time, but eventually warm water comes from the tap. I stand, step into the tub, pull the plastic curtain around me, and pull the knob to activate the shower. I shrink from a brief burst of cold, but then the warm water reaches the showerhead, pours over me. Warm water on my face, releasing all tension, banishing all bad thoughts. It soaks into my hair, drips down over my breasts, my belly, my back and my legs. I raise my arms, to make sure my armpits get wet, I cup my hands between my legs, making sure every part of me feels the cleansing, soothing warmth.

There's a shampoo bottle on the side of the tub. It's a good brand, I recognize the name. I don't dwell on the irony that I can remember the name of a shampoo, but not my own. I just squeeze some into my hand, and begin massaging it into my hair, into my scalp. I work the shampoo into the length of my hair, pulling it all forward over my shoulder. I watch as the suds drip down my body, over my breasts, between my legs. I take a handful of suds and work it in between my legs, cleaning, front and back.

Then I just stand, feeling the force of the water. My eyes are closed; the water warms me all over. I don't want this moment to ever end. I've rinsed the soap from my hair, my body, long ago, but I continue to stand in the warm spray, simply enjoying the peace of this moment.

Without my asking it to, my hand reaches down and shuts off the water. I would have stayed here all day, but I suppose that's not such a good idea. John will not be happy if there is no hot water left. I pull back the plastic curtain and step out of the tub.

There's a towel on a rack, beside the toilet. I lift it from the rack; use it to pat my face dry. I pat my hair until it no longer drips, then wipe my shoulders, my arms, my armpits. I dry my breasts, following their curves; dry my flat belly, around to the small of my back. I dry my ass, around to the front, the triangle of fur between my legs. I dry my thighs, the back of my knees, my calves, my ankles and feet. Then I go back to my hair again, folding it into the towel, squeezing the water from my hair into the towel. When I'm finished I fold the towel in half lengthwise, and place it back on the towel rack.

I find my panties on the floor, pick them up, shake them out. I look at them closely – they should be good for another day's wearing. They have to be, I don't have anything else. I quickly step into them, pull them up, adjust them over my hips.

My bra is hanging from the doorknob. I pick it up, take a look. I intended to inspect the hooks, figure out how it does up before attempting to do so behind my back, but something else catches my eye. The bra has a brand name tag on one side. That's not unusual, but it looks like there's some handwriting on the back. I step closer to the bathroom light for a better look. On the back of the tag, written in purple ink it clearly says, "Sara N."

Sara. Is that my name? I try it out a few times. I looked at the girl in the mirror and said "Sara" out loud. It fits. Even though I still don't remember, it seems right. I look at the writing on the tag, and have an idea.

I leave the bathroom, taking my bra with me, and go to the kitchen. Looking around, I find a pad and pen by the phone, pick them up, sit at the kitchen table. I arrange the pad in

front of me; take the cap from the pen and write, "Sara." Comparing the handwriting to the writing on my bra tag, it's difficult to tell, but I think they're the same. I wrote this name, in this bra.

Holding my bra and the pad close together, I look at them again, read them both, and smile. I can hardly contain myself. This is my name! I know my name, and it's Sara! I laugh as I stand from the table, holding my bra in front of me. I know two things. I know my name is Sara, and I know that I'm the kind of girl who writes her name in her underwear, which seems very sensible. I know three things – I'm also the kind of girl that uses a purple pen. Maybe I can change that. I read my name again as I return to the bathroom.

Which is locked. I jump back, but the knob begins to turn, the door pushes open. John is on the other side, washing his hands.

I stand, almost naked in front of him, watch as he finishes. "I was just going to finish dressing," I tell him.

"Sure, come on in, I'm done," he replies.

I step past him, around the box of clothes, sit on the toilet and pick up my old, filthy T-shirt. I don't want to put it on. I push my old jeans around the floor a little with my foot.

John finishes drying his hands, using the same towel I just used for my shower, watches my discomfort. He shoves the towel back onto the rack and tells me, "Take anything you want from the box."

I drop the T-shirt quickly and stand. "Are you sure?" I ask.

"Sure," he says. "She's never coming back for any of it."

He doesn't elaborate on who "she" is, and I guess it doesn't matter. He leaves, but I suddenly remember. Crossing to the door and sticking my head into the hallway I call after him, "My name is Sara."

"Okay," he calls back.

I close the door, return to the mirror with my bra. Taking one last look at the hooks, I slide my arms into the shoulder straps, adjust the cups under my breasts, stretch the back straps behind me, try to fit the tiny hooks together. With some effort they fit into place. I look in the mirror, make a final adjustment for comfort, then look in the box.

There isn't much to choose from. I find a pink, short sleeve blouse with a cute lace collar, and a skirt made from bright, colorful, horizontal strips of cloth. They don't completely match, but I put them on, thinking about what to do next.

There's no makeup in the bathroom, or in the box either. Maybe John will give me a little money to go out and get a few things. There are a lot of things I can do around here for him. For one thing, I can wash his towels. He can go out to work, while I straighten the house, do the shopping, greet him when he comes home with a hot meal after a hard day. Everything will be perfect.

I look in the mirror and smile. The skirt fits nicely, but the top is a bit tight around my chest. I adjust it down, pull it forward as best I can until it looks nice. I take a comb from the countertop, comb out my hair, still damp. I wish I had just a bit of makeup.