



Lisa Scottoline

#1 BESTSELLING AUTHOR

Someone Knows

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Someone Knows



Lisa Scottoline

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It is not your memories which haunt you.

It is not what you have written down.

It is what you have forgotten, what you must forget.

What you must go on forgetting all your life.

—JAMES FENTON, “A German Requiem”

PROLOGUE



Nobody tells you that you'll do things when you're young that are so stupid, so unbelievably stupid, so *horrifically* stupid that years later you won't be able to believe it. You'll be on your laptop, or reading a book, or pumping gas, and you'll find yourself shaking your head because you'll be thinking *no, no, no, I did not do that, I was not a part of that, that could not have happened.*

You'll tell yourself that you were young, that you were drinking, that good teenagers make bad decisions all the time. But you know that's not it. You know that when teenagers get together, something dark can take over. Call it peer pressure, call it a collective idiocy, call it something more primal and monstrous, like whatever makes frat boys haze their so-called brothers to death. Writ large, it makes Nazis murder millions and soldiers torch Vietnamese villages. But whatever you call it, it will make you do the worst thing you ever did in your life. And in your darkest moments, you will wonder if it *made* you do it, or simply *allowed* you to.

You know this now but you didn't then, and you'll shake your head, thinking *I can't believe I did that, I can't believe I was a part of that*, but you were, and not in Nazi Germany, My Lai, or a frat house, but in the safest place you can imagine—in the suburban housing development where you grew up, specifically in a patch of woods mandated by township zoning, confined by fences, and bordered by the

Pennsylvania Turnpike. In other words, in a completely civilized location where even Nature herself is domesticated and nothing ever happens.

Except this one night.

You and your friends decide to play Russian Roulette, a game so obviously lethal that you can't even imagine what you were thinking. Days later, years later, a *decade* later, it's still so unspeakable you can't say a word to anyone, and all the books you read that you should've learned something from—*Lord of the Flies*, *A Separate Peace*, and *Crime and Punishment*—teach you absolutely nothing. You read like a fiend, you always have, but you don't let the books teach you anything. You never apply them to your life because they're fiction, or even if they seem real, they're someone else's life, not your life, except that you and your friends decided to play a prank and someone blew their brains out in front of you.

You won't be able to remember exactly what happened because of the booze and the horror, the *absolute horror*, and yet you won't be able to forget it, though you'll spend night after night trying. People say something was *a night to remember*, but this was *a night to forget* and yet you can't forget, and then you'll hear some random playlist and Rihanna singing *don't act like you forgot* and you'll realize you've been *acting like you forgot* your entire adult life, and you'll feel accused by a song, nailed by a phrase, and *don't act like you forgot* is everything, *don't act like you forgot* is all, and you'll pick up the bottle and say to yourself, *I'm acting like I forgot but I didn't, I didn't forget*, and you'll need to be put out of your own misery, so you'll drink and drink, trying to drink yourself to death.

But that takes too long. Years too long. Time doesn't move fast enough. You learned that the hard way.

One night, you'll lose patience.

CHAPTER 1



Allie Garvey

Allie gripped the wheel, heading to the cemetery. The death was awful enough in someone so young, agonizing because it was a suicide. The family would be anguished, wracking their brains, asking *why*. But Allie knew *why*, and she wasn't the only one. There used to be four of them, and now there were three. They had kept it a secret for twenty years. She didn't know if she could keep it secret another minute.

Allie drove ahead, her thoughts going back to the summer of '99. She could hear the gunshot ringing in her ears. She could see the blood. It had happened right in front of her. Her gut twisted. She felt wrung by guilt. She had nightmares and flashbacks. She'd been fifteen years old, and it had been a night of firsts. First time hanging with the cool kids. First time getting drunk. First time being kissed. First time falling in love. And then the gunshot.

Allie clenched the wheel, holding on for dear life, to what she didn't know. To the present. To reality. To sanity. She had to stay strong. She had to be brave. She had to do what needed to be done. She should have done it twenty years ago. She'd kept the secret all this time. She'd been living a contents-under-pressure life. Now she wanted to explode.

Allie approached the cemetery entrance. She knew the others would be there. A reunion of co-conspirators. She hadn't spoken to

them after what had happened. They'd had no contact since. They'd run away from each other and what they'd done. They'd thought getting caught was the worst that could happen. Allie had learned otherwise. *Not* getting caught was worse.

They'd grown up in Brandywine Hunt, a development in a corner of Chester County, Pennsylvania, where the horse farms had been razed, the trees cleared, and the grassy hills leveled. Concrete pads had been paved for McMansions, and asphalt rolled for driveways. Thoroughbred Road had been the outermost of the development's concentric streets, and at its center were the clubhouse, pool, tennis and basketball courts, like the prize for the successful completion of a suburban labyrinth.

Allie always thought of her childhood that way, a series of passages that led her to bump into walls. Her therapist theorized it was because of her older sister, Jill, who'd had an illness that Allie had been too young to understand, at first. It had sounded like *sis-something*, which had made sense to Allie—her sister had *sis*. Until one nightmarish race to the hospital, with her father driving like a madman and her mother hysterical in the backseat holding Jill, who was frantically gasping for breath, her face turning blue. Allie had watched, terrified at the realization that *sis* could kill her sister. And when her sister turned seventeen, it did.

Allie bit her lip, catching sight of the wrought-iron fence. Her sister was buried at the same cemetery, the grave marked by a monument sunk into the manicured grass. Its marble was rosy pink, a color Jill had picked out herself, calling it *Dead Barbie Pink*. Allie remembered that at Jill's funeral she had cried so hard she laughed, or laughed so hard she cried, she didn't know which.

Allie braked, waiting for traffic to pass so she could turn. GARDENS OF PEACE, read the tasteful sign, and it was one of a chain of local cemeteries, fitting for a region of housing developments, as if life could be planned from birth to death.

Her gut tightened again, and she focused on her breathing exercises, *in and out, in and out*. Yoga and meditation were no match for a guilty conscience. She hadn't fired the gun, but she was responsible. She replayed the memory at night, tortured with shame. She'd

never told anyone, not even her husband. No wonder her marriage was circling the drain.

Allie steered through the cemetery entrance. Pebbled gravel popped beneath the tires of her gray Audi, and she drove toward the black hearse, limos, and parked cars. Mourners were walking to the burial site, and she spotted the other two instantly.

They were walking together, talking, heads down. Gorgeous, privileged, rich. The cool kids, grown up. They didn't look up or see her. They wouldn't expect her, since she hadn't been one of them, not really. They hadn't followed her life the way she'd followed theirs. She was the one looking at them, never vice versa. That's how it always is for outsiders.

Allie told herself once more to stay strong. The cool kids believed their secret was going to stay safe forever, but they were wrong.

It was time for forever to end.

Part One

—TWENTY YEARS EARLIER—

This is where we began

Being what we can.

—STEPHEN SONDHEIM, “OUR TIME,” *Merrily We Roll Along*



CHAPTER 2



Allie Garvey

Allie ran up the hill in the woods, her breath ragged and her thighs aching. Her house was just around the corner, and she wished she could sneak home, but she didn't want to be there, either. Her sister, Jill, had died last summer, and since then the house had felt hollow, empty, silent.

Allie had to keep going, pumping her arms. When Allie had turned nine, her mother had finally explained Jill's illness, which wasn't *sis* but cystic fibrosis. Allie hadn't known that the disease was fatal back then, or any of the statistics on life expectancy, but when Jill was well enough to travel, the Garveys took trips to Disney World and Hawaii, like a do-it-yourself Make-A-Wish. Her mother said *we're making memories*, but Allie didn't know how to live in the present and the future at the same time. The Garveys smiled hard when they were happy because they were also sad, taking the bitter with the sweet, the good with the bad, every single minute.

Her sister's coughing was the background noise of her childhood, though Jill muffled the sound at night, not to keep the house awake. Every morning, Jill took antibiotics in pill form, and Pulmozyme and albuterol through a nebulizer. Every time she ate a meal or a snack, she took pancreatic enzymes, and she endured percussive therapy twice a day. Jill never complained, and everyone said she was a *trouper*,

an *angel*, even a *saint*, but Allie knew the real Jill, who was funny, goofy, and naughty. The real Jill loved thick books with maps in the front and joked that she was going to smoke when she grew up. The real Jill wasn't a saint, but something much better. A big sister.

If Jill was dying on the outside, Allie was dying on the inside. When Jill was hurting, Allie couldn't stop her tears, crying in her pillow for them both. The worst was when she helped with Jill's percussive therapy. She'd beat her sister's rib cage to loosen up the mucus, which left them both drenched with effort, just to win a few puffs of something as insubstantial as air. *Air*: You couldn't see it, but you couldn't live without it. It didn't weigh *anything*, but it had all the weight in the world. It was like a bad riddle. It was even *free*. All you had to do was *breathe*. *Take a deep breath*, people said, but Jill had never had one of those in her life, which ended after seventeen years, at home.

Allie had been there when Jill died, hugging her in hysterics, clinging to her like a kitten hooking its flimsy nails into a sweater. Allie had been heartbroken, devastated, reeling at the prospect of a life that no longer included Jill. Allie didn't know who she was without Jill. She was not-Jill in a world that was Jill's, in a family that revolved around Jill's illness, specialty meds, and therapies.

Allie didn't know how her family would fill the hole that Jill left because it was everything. It wasn't a hole, it was the *whole*. So it could never be filled. Now Jill was gone and so were the hospital bed, commode, nebulizers, oxygen tanks, and pill bottles. But somehow Jill was everywhere, in the very air. Her absence was her presence, and the girl who could never get air had *become* it. The Garvey family breathed Jill every moment.

The thought made Allie's stomach knot, and sweat broke out on her forehead. Tryouts for the cross-country team were coming up, and she needed an extracurricular to get into a good college. She couldn't sing well enough to make choir, didn't play an instrument, and was too shy to be onstage. Her guidance counselor told her she should write about Jill for her personal essay, but Allie wasn't about to write *My Sister Died So Let Me into Penn*.

Allie kept running, panting hard, her legs hurting. She'd gained

fifteen pounds and was falling so far behind the others she didn't know how she would catch up. It was how she felt all the time lately. *Behind.* After Jill's funeral, Allie was supposed to go to school like nothing ever happened, but that was impossible. The other girls had best friends, but Allie's best friend was Jill. She didn't fit in any of the cliques, like the pretty princesses, the field-hockey jocks, the fast girls who smoked, the goths, druggies, mathletes, or Ecology Club hippies. The boys called her Allie Gravy, and she was behind everyone, a permanent little sister to the world.

Suddenly a silhouette appeared at the top of the hill. It was Sasha Barrow, captain of the development's running team and one of the most popular girls in school. Sasha was tall, lean, and totally beautiful, with big blue eyes, a tiny nose, and not a single zit. She had on a cool blue Nike tank and silky dolphin shorts, like a professional runner compared with Allie's thick Phillies T-shirt and old gray gym shorts. Sasha ran for the development team as a way to stay in shape for the cross-country team at school.

"Hurry up!" Sasha shouted, her hands on her slim hips.

Allie sped up, but her ankle turned and she tumbled to the ground, landing on her butt. Her face went red and hot. She tried to get up, but her ankle hurt and she eased back down. Her knee was skinned, a grid of droplets.

"What are you doing down there?"

"I fell!"

"I can see that!"

Then why did you ask? Jill would have said. But Allie didn't.

"Come on!"

"Just go! I'm fine!"

"What's your name again?" Sasha came down the incline, her sleek ponytail swinging back and forth. She had on a wide black headband that Allie could never wear because they popped off her head.

"Allie Garvey."

"Are you in my class?" Sasha reached Allie and stood over her.

"Yes, in the other section. I live in Brandywine Hunt, too, on Percheron." Allie realized she was answering questions she hadn't been

asked. She didn't know how to act around Sasha Barrow, who was wearing blue mascara. Allie hadn't even known that mascara came in colors.

"I'm on Pinto."

"I know," Allie said, then regretted it, wiping her brow. Sasha wasn't sweating and smelled like vanilla. Allie sweated like a pig and smelled like cellulite.

"Okay, so get up, Allie."

"Please, go back with the others. I'll be fine."

"Try!" Sasha's pursed lips glistened with pink gloss.

"I'm not going to make the team."

"Duh."

Allie's mouth went dry. She felt nervous around Sasha Barrow. She tried to think of what Jill would have said. Jill had attitude.

"Allie. You really can't get up?"

And then, Allie did it. For one moment, she summoned Jill's spirit and said exactly what Jill would have said. "If I could, would I be sitting where worms could crawl in my *vagina*?"

Sasha burst into laughter, and Allie could see why Sasha was popular, and it wasn't only that she was pretty. There was a wild spark about her, a natural confidence.

"I'll try to get up." Allie shifted.

Suddenly Sasha pointed down the hill. "Look," she whispered. "What are they up to?"

Allie turned to see that two boys in tennis whites were digging under the base of a tree with a sharp bend in its trunk, at the bottom of the hill. Leafy branches covered the boys from view, but Allie recognized David Hybrinski right away. He was dreamy, with a great smile even though he never had braces. His hair was thick and wavy, a reddish-brown color, and he was tall, with a muscular body that made him look older. Allie always saw him hitting against the backboard at the tennis courts while Jill was swimming the laps that were supposed to increase her lung capacity. When David hit the ball over the fence, he'd call to the kids, *little help, please*, and they'd fetch the ball for him like puppy dogs.

"Who's the boy with David?" Allie whispered.

“Julian Browne. He lives across the street from me, but he goes to Lutheran now.” Sasha’s eyes glittered. “Let’s bust them.”

“What?” Allie asked, but Sasha was already cupping her hands around her mouth.

“Hey, down there! Freeze, this is the police! You’re under arrest!”

The boys looked up, startled, then burst into relieved laughter, which echoed in the quiet woods. Sasha pulled Allie to her feet, looping an arm around her shoulders, and started down the hill with her, while Allie smoothed her hair back, trying to look good, though this wouldn’t have been the day she’d pick to meet David Hybrinski. She’d sweated off her flesh-toned Clearasil, and her long brown curls frizzed. At least her braces were finally off and her eyes were a nice blue, but boys weren’t into eyes. She pulled her damp T-shirt away from her body, so David couldn’t see the blubber that made her belly button into a big O, like a mouth shouting, *LOOK AT MY FAT!*

They got closer, and Sasha called out, “What are you doing?”

“Nothing!” Julian was shorter than David and handsome in a preppy way, with hazel eyes, a refined nose, and a small mouth with thin lips. His hair was straight, brown, and shiny, and he looked lean in a white T-shirt that said CRT SPORTS CAMP. He covered whatever they were digging, then stood up as the girls reached the bottom of the hill.

“What’s going on?” Sasha let go of Allie, as the boys stood side by side. Their bicycles and backpacks lay on the ground nearby.

“I told you, nothing,” Julian repeated, his smile sly.

“Buried treasure,” David added. “Gold doubloons.”

“Come on, what is it?” Sasha took a step toward them. “Tell me.”

David noticed Allie and flashed her a smile. “I know you. You’re in the other section.”

“Yeah, and I live in the development, too.” Allie couldn’t believe David Hybrinski knew who she was. She felt so *seen*, and he had such a nice way about him, like a gentleman. Up close, his eyes were as brown as a Hershey bar.

Sasha gestured at the other boy. “Julian, where are your manners? Introduce yourself to Allie Garvey.”

"Julian Browne," the other boy said, flashing a big grin, and Allie started to wonder if the cool kids were just big smiles hanging in the air, like the Cheshire cat in *Alice in Wonderland*. Jill used to read it to Allie when she was little, and Allie had thought the title was *Allison Wonderland*.

Julian kept smiling. "I don't know if you can keep a secret, Sasha."

"Of course." Sasha snorted. "And if you don't tell me what it is, I'll come back and dig it up myself."

David turned to Allie. "Can *you* keep a secret?"

"Yes." Allie hid her excitement that he was talking to her.

"Okay, then. Come look." Julian moved the backpack, crouched, and started digging with his hands. "I had this project for Environmental Bio. Indigenous wildflower identification. I was looking for bluets."

"What's that?" Sasha asked.

"It's a blue flower." Julian kept digging as he spoke. "It's like a cornflower or a forget-me-not."

"And you have to do this over the summer? Is this a *private school* thing?" Sasha made a face, but Allie didn't think anything bad about private school. Her parents had talked about private school for Jill, but they ended up with tutors, which was how Allie learned some French. She and Jill used to say *tant pis* because it sounded like *tant pee*, then Jill started saying *tant penis*, which cracked them up.

Julian kept digging. "My mother told me that bluets don't bloom late in the summer, so I should look now, in the woods. Of course it's not a real woods. We have to leave a certain percentage of the woods or the township won't let us build."

Sasha said to Allie, "Julian's father built the development."

"His company did," Julian corrected her. "He does business as Browne Land Management."

"Oh," Allie said, impressed. Her father was an orthodontist in Exton, and he didn't do business as anything but Dr. Garvey. It bugged him that he hadn't gone to medical school, only dental, and one time, at their hotel in Orlando, one of the guests got sick and the manager called her father. He had to admit he wasn't a medical doctor.

“I saw a patch of bluets under this tree. I started taking pictures, then I noticed this paper sticking out of the dirt.” Julian finished digging, and both boys moved away from the hole, revealing a wrinkled piece of newspaper wrapped around something. They unwrapped it like a gift, but it was a gun.

Allie gasped, her hand flying to her mouth.

“Whoa!” Sasha hooted. “Let me have it!”

CHAPTER 3



Sasha Barrow

Let me have it!" Sasha felt a bolt of excitement when she saw the gun, which had a short shiny barrel and a dark wooden handle. She leaned over to pick it up, but Julian caught her hand.

"No, don't."

"I want to hold it."

"Why?"

"Why not?" Sasha couldn't believe that Julian was asking her such a stupid question. She couldn't believe that he was saying *no* to her, either. He'd been in love with her forever. "Have *you* ever held a gun?"

"Not before this one."

"David, have you?" Sasha turned to him.

"Sure. My uncle hunts. He has rifles and a handgun just like this."

"What kind of gun is it?"

"A .38 special. A revolver. It's old."

"How old?"

"I don't know. This newspaper is from June 2, 1995." David held up a crumpled sports page. "Doesn't mean it was buried that day, but whatever."

Sasha returned her attention to Julian. "Julian, it's not yours just because you found it."

Julian smiled. "Ever hear of finders keepers?"

"How old are you? Twelve?"

Julian's smile evaporated, and Sasha reminded herself to be nicer. Her father always said *you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar* and that her mother *should try it sometime*. Sasha knew her parents were going to get divorced someday, because her mother was human vinegar.

Sasha forced a smile. "Can I please just hold it?"

"Guys?" Allie raised her hand. "If you found a gun, I think you should take it to the police. I mean, you guys heard about Columbine. You can't have a gun. It's zero-tolerance. Just turn it in."

"Who asked you?" Sasha glared at Allie, who wasn't even a friend of theirs.

"But it could be a murder weapon." Allie shuddered. "Why would somebody bury a gun? Is it loaded?"

"No," Julian answered.

Sasha snorted. "Julian, let's load it!"

"We don't have any bullets."

"Then buy some! Don't you want to shoot it? Let's do it!"

Julian shook his head. "We can't. People will hear. The houses are too close."

"So let's go somewhere *else!*" Sasha threw up her hands. "Duh!"

"No, don't." Allie clucked. "You probably need a permit, and it's dangerous."

Sasha turned to her, angry. "Allie, don't be stupid. It's a gun, not a bomb. No police are going to know we have it. We could put it in a backpack."

David shook his head. "I agree with Allie. I don't think we should move it. Even though it's old, the owner could come back for it. We don't want to let on we found it."

"Oh, enough!" Sasha dove between the boys, grabbed the gun, and scooted a few steps away.

Julian advanced on Sasha. "Give it back, please. It's not a toy."

"Oh my God, this is amazing!" Sasha loved holding the gun. It felt heavy in her hand and packed so much power. Even without bullets, it excited her.

Julian held out his hand. "Sasha, please?"

"No, I just want to see it!" Sasha held him off with an arm. The metal was silver, and she ran a fingertip along the side, where it had been damaged. "This is scratched."

Julian nodded. "They destroyed the serial numbers so the gun couldn't be traced."

"How do you know that?"

"I researched it. The round part is the cylinder, where the bullets go. The holes that hold the bullets are called 'chambers.' There are five, so it holds five bullets. Or 'rounds.'"

"And the cylinder revolves." Sasha pressed a little lever, which freed the cylinder to spin. "*That's* why they call it a revolver."

"Exactly." Julian smiled.

"It feels really *good*." Sasha aimed the gun, double-fisted. She was pretty sure she could hit anything she wanted. It was a thrill.

David frowned. "Sasha, you're being freaky."

Allie added, "Sasha, we have to get going. They'll notice we're missing."

"Almost done." Sasha flopped the gun over in her palm and pressed the lever again. The cylinder popped open, revealing five perfectly round chambers, then she closed it again.

"Give it back." Julian held out his hand. "And you have to agree to not tell anybody about it. Agree?"

"Bang!" Sasha shouted, pretending to shoot him, and they all laughed.

Except Allie.



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