

# Fogged Up Fairy Tale



by Denise Baer

## *Erased*

~~~~~

*2014 (Present Day) - Dover, New Hampshire*

**M**y name is Brand Rye and last year I lost my life—not literally, but mentally. I had amnesia, which erased my past memories. It was an awakening for me to recreate my life and regain my memory. With the help of my husband and friends, I learned about myself. This is an interwoven story of the days I struggled with amnesia and the past that I had lost and recovered.

Life is an ongoing battle of truth and happiness. This is about my battle. A second chance to see myself from the outside looking in and to mend the fractured parts. Over time, all my recollections returned.

## Prologue

~~~~~

2013 - Dover, New Hampshire

A blast of light and a deafening sound, intrusive and obscene like the buzzing of cicadas, were the last things I remembered. The sting of glass followed. My chest and face felt as if someone swung a baseball bat into them. Time stretched on, especially when the light and sound subsided. Something warm dripped down my face. My arms and legs were too heavy to lift. Or were they even there? A sound broke the silence, a sound that came from me, raw and infested with fear. Afraid of the worst, I kept my eyes closed to avoid seeing parts of me laying elsewhere. Smoke covered me as the car got hotter. I tried to scream, but coughed instead.

In the distance, I heard a siren, its volume increased as it got closer. Someone was talking and holding my hand when the ambulance arrived. I couldn't quite grasp what they meant—*horrible—get her out of there—the car's about to blow.*

Hands dragged my dead weight from the car as if I were a wet blanket. At times, my eyes fluttered open to the abuse of light and blurred images. I closed them to stop the dizziness. Moved to the ambulance bed, someone placed an oxygen mask on me, and darkness wiped out the moment. The back of my eyelids burned an image of a man who I had continuous visions of for whatever reason.

The next thing I remembered was waking in a hospital room with that man, who I had seen in the darkness, sitting next to me. He rose from the chair when he heard me and took my hand. I didn't know him, which intensified my existing fear. Why was a stranger in my hospital room? What happened? I wiggled my hand free and pulled myself upright. I touched my face and found patches of cloth. My eyes narrowed at the man with more confusion and fear.

A short, stocky nurse came into the room with a friendly smile. "Well, hello. It's so nice to see you awake."

I touched my head again. "What day is it?"

"It's Thursday, Sweetie."

"How long have I been here?"

She let out a hearty laugh. "Five days. I guess you needed your sleep."

I squinted down at my legs trying to remember. "A week? What happened?"

"You were in a car accident." I turned toward the man who was speaking to me.

"An accident?" I shook my head to jiggle everything back into place. It didn't work. "What accident?"

In silence, the nurse took my blood pressure.

He placed his hands on the bed rail. "You hit another car, your car spun around and smashed into a tree. You have been in a coma for several days."

"Did anyone else get hurt?"

"No. The other driver had only minor cuts and bruises."

Tears fell. Maybe the white light and noise erased the tragedy or masked it for a while. The nurse gave me a box of tissues as she continued to fiddle around with IVs and vitals. Similar to walking through a muddy stream, my murky thoughts kept getting stuck. When one thought came into mind, it sunk away as I pulled at another. The nurse finished, patted my hand, informed me that the doctor would be in soon, and left.

The room got colder.

The man cleared his throat before he asked, "How are you feeling?"

"Fine."

"You'll feel better once you get home."

I balled up the covers in my hands, pulling a little at a time, and stared at my feet. What was happening? I couldn't make sense of anything. To calm myself, I pressed a hand against my chest to ease my breathing, in hopes the air would cool down the heat inside my lungs. He put his hand on my arm. I slid it away and leaned toward the opposite side of the bed.

"Fine. I won't touch you." He threw his arms in the air signifying defeat, walked over to the foot of the bed, the ashen sky a backdrop for the mood in the room. Then he turned to me and said, "You know I should be the one pissed. You caused the accident because you were texting." He turned to me irritated by my lack of response. "Say the word and I'm out of here."

I pulled the sheet to my chin. "Who are you?"

His mouth dropped open, and then, as if in slow motion, he whispered, "Your husband."

## *(One) Petri Dish*

~~~~~

*2013 - Dover, New Hampshire*

Home—to me it was a foreign place with zero memories. When we arrived my first day back, there were a few people waiting outside the door with arms full of food. Introduced as neighbors, they came inside, and watched for signs of ... What? I felt like a substance in a petri dish. These people stared at me, searching for a clue that I might remember. Or maybe curiosity got the best of them, and they wanted to witness a memory wipe. They watched every move I made as if all my memories would come flooding back with a simple wave of the hand.

I redirected my attention to my lap to avoid their stares. My hand stretched open so I could trace the dark red lines that created an M in the middle of my palm. Lines that trailed to my wrist. Did the M stand for marriage? I couldn't remember along with everything else. I bit my lower lip, scrunched my eyebrows, and raised my head to find nothing had changed. No one shifted or lost focus from me. I gave each strained constipated face a heavy sigh. A puff of air escaped my mouth with a tiny laugh.

He came to sit next to me, Easton, the one from the hospital who claimed to be my husband, and placed his hand on my upper back. "Is there something you remember?"

I shook my head and everyone released a loud breath of air, letting me know I deflated their hope. He rubbed my back, gave a reassuring smile and said, "That's fine. It will come to you over time." He addressed the few people there. "I'm sure Brand is tired after all that has happened. Maybe it's time we let her rest and reacquaint herself with her home. I, I mean we, appreciate all of your support."

The neighbors nodded in agreement. One by one, they pressed my hand between theirs, wishing me well and filed out the door. While they were escaping the uncomfortable situation, talking in hushed voices to Easton, I glanced around the living room. It looked like a picture from a Pottery Barn magazine. The couch and chairs resembled something found in a house by the sea. They were a light yellow, fluffy and comfy, balanced with the faux-painting aged effect of the distressed yellow walls. A rustic off-white coffee table with three wicker baskets underneath divided the couch and chair. On the large wall to the left of the bay window was a stone fireplace with pictures loaded on the mantel. At the time, I thought what great taste I had if I really was Brand.

I turned my head to find Easton watching me. He was handsome. I was awkward. For not knowing him, he made me feel safe, which was probably because of the days following the accident. We spent every day together as he sat in my hospital room telling me about our life. When he arrived, he introduced himself and told me about the different things we had done. Easton said we had been married for five years. The car accident had cut out the memories of our marriage—my life. I had to rely on a man I didn't know to spoon-feed me with glimpses of my past, which had vanished overnight.

Soon the stillness of the room started to itch, and our eyes glanced everywhere else but at each other, not knowing what to do next. Finally, I moved to the living room window to watch the cruel weather. Sheets of water

came down, flooding the front yard and putting a strain on the tree branches. I wrapped my arms around the front of me, while I tried to figure out how I got here, in this living room, with a man I didn't know. I turned to see if Easton was still there. He was gone, but I heard noises coming from the kitchen so I walked over there. I leaned against the doorjamb to find Easton making sandwiches. He piled them high with turkey, lettuce, and tomato. A side of potato salad took up the rest of the plate.

He turned and said, "I'm sure you're hungry. You love turkey sandwiches, and I bought a nice supply of your favorite potato salad."

I slipped into the room to see, but he signaled toward the table, and sat across from me. I nudged a few potatoes with my fork before puncturing one and putting it in my mouth. The tangy mustard teased my taste buds, and I couldn't help but suck in the sides of my cheeks to tame the sourness. I liked it. The potato salad had sprinkles of chives, and it wasn't too creamy. I scooped more on my fork.

When I finished chewing, I readjusted in my seat before I spoke. "I can't remember this being my favorite potato salad, but it's really good."

He put his fork down when he spoke. "I'm glad. The doctor said that your memory will come back to you in pieces, little by little, so I thought I'd help by giving you things you like."

My hands pressed down on the sandwich to flatten it, then I picked it up. He smiled as I took a bite, which left globs of mayonnaise in the corners of my mouth. I didn't waste too much time circling my tongue around to scoop the rest of the leftovers.

"You always did that when eating a sandwich," he said. I gave him a questioning look. "Pressing down on it."

I swallowed and then asked, "Do I like cheese on my sandwiches?"

"Uh, yeah, I forgot the cheese."

He was about to get it when I said, "Don't worry about it. This is fine. I can have cheese another time, right?"

He hesitated and then nodded in agreement.

We ate the rest of lunch in silence. Sometimes I caught him glancing at me. I'm sure this was hard for him too. A wife not knowing her husband. We cleared the table, and I started washing the dishes under his protest. When he saw that I wasn't going to stop, he grabbed a towel and took care of the rest.

We wandered back into the living room, and he asked, "Would you like to take a nap? I can show you to your room?"

"No thanks. I feel like I've slept long enough."

I folded my arms and he slid his hands into his jeans' pockets. The uneasiness started drifting back. "If you have something to do, please, don't let me stop you. You don't have to babysit me. With all the time you spent at the hospital, I'm sure you probably have plenty to do here or at work."

The tension lifted and he flopped onto the couch. "I've got nothing to do today. I took off work because I wanted to make sure you were okay."

I imitated him by flopping down on the chair. My arms ran along the armrests while I hesitated before talking. "Do you mind if I ask you some questions?"

"Nope."

"I know we talked a lot in the hospital, but there was so much for me to take in that I can't remember everything. Again, what is it you do for a living?"

"I'm an investigator. I do undercover work. Sometimes it takes me away from home for long

periods of time.”

“Sounds interesting. Do I have a job?”

“No. You worked with me on a case, which was how we fell in love and married.”

I could only imagine how red my face got, but I skimmed over that fact and continued with the questions. “If I didn’t work, what did I do all day?”

He didn’t respond right away. Instead, he shifted on the couch until the words came. When that happened, he said, “There’s a lot for us to talk about, and I don’t think it’s a good idea to bombard you with all the details right now. We should take it slow.”

“What kind of details?”

“Brand! The details of your life.”

I shifted forward, placed my hands on my knees to give them a slight squeeze, and said, “I don’t remember anything other than a little bit of the accident and being in the hospital. I need something that will help me understand who I am and what our life is like. I don’t want a nap, so please, *please* tell me about my life.”

Easton put his right ankle over his left knee and fiddled with his shoelaces. He finally nodded. “Well, your mom kept you in-line before we met. You were close to her, and until your accident, you talked about her all the time. I have heard countless repeated stories and memories of your relationship.”

My mother had laid the groundwork in my life. She pampered me with kindness, and guided me with a heavy hand. Easton teased my memory with stories of my mother, and in return, over time, the frozen memories melted and came flooding back.

**For a free electronic copy in exchange for an ‘honest’ review, please contact Denise Baer at [denise@authordenisebaer.com](mailto:denise@authordenisebaer.com).**