

Chapter 2 (part 2)

(Subject to Change)

“Sweet car, man.” Ethan whistled as he walked toward the shiny sports car to get a better look.

“Thanks.” Connor flashed Ethan a quick glance before looking at me. “Ready?”

I gave him a small smile and nodded. I was riddled with guilt as I walked toward the car. I realized that for the last few minutes, I had forgotten that I was engaged to Connor. And if Connor hadn’t pulled up just now, Ethan may have been able to convince me see him again.

When I got to the car, to my surprise, Ethan ran over to open the passenger door for me. I saw Connor study Ethan in silence as I slid into the car.

“Well it was *very* nice to meet you, Liv.” Ethan gently closed the door behind me. His smooth words raised the hairs on my body.

I turned toward him. “Yeah,” I replied softly. I could sense both Connor’s and Ethan’s eyes glued on me. I met Ethan gaze and flashed him a friendly smile, trying to think about anything but those deep, captivating eyes. “Thanks for catching my fall. I appreciate it.”

“No problem. Be careful with those killer shoes. I can’t always be around to save you.” He gave me a wink and I felt my face grow hot as I felt Connor’s laser-like stare intensify on us.

Connor cleared his throat and flashed Ethan a polite smile. “Thanks for your help.” Then I heard the engine rev, signaling to Ethan that we were leaving.

Ethan smiled and kept his eyes on me. “See you around.” There was nothing casual about the way he said those words. It wasn’t a goodbye. It was a statement—a promise he intended to keep.

I felt my body tense at his words and finally pulled my eyes away from him as Connor stepped on the gas pedal, quickly taking us away from Ethan.

We drove in silence for a few minutes, and with each passing second, I felt the awkwardness and tension grow between us.

“Who was that?” Connor finally asked. To my surprise, he didn’t sound angry or upset. His voice was calm, business-like, and distant, perfected from years of training.

“No one,” I reassured him. But on the inside, I wondered if he was the only one I was trying to reassure.

“Has he been harassing you?”

I heard an edge of concern in his voice and smiled at how protective he was over me. “No,” I answered, though I knew that wasn’t exactly the truth. “I had almost tripped right before you pulled up and he caught my fall. And then you pulled up.” *This is the truth*, I told myself. But as much as I tried to convince myself of this, it felt like I had just lied to him. *Am I a bad person?* I tried to push away the thought and turned to look at Connor. “Thanks for driving me home. I really appreciate it.”

He looked over at me and smiled. His warm, hazel eyes gleamed as I met his gaze. He reached for my hand and squeezed it. “Don’t be silly, Liv. Of course I’d pick you up and take you back home. I hope that with you being back at our house, it’ll help you with your memory.”

“Our house?” I repeated, surprised by this revelation.

“Yes, we live together.” He tried to hide the frown on his face as he turned his gaze forward and looked straight at the road.

“How long have we lived together?”

“About three months before the accident.”

“I’m sorry, Connor,” I said softly as I realized how hard this must be for him.

He looked over at me and pulled my hand up toward his lips and gently kissed it. “Don’t be. I know this is hard on you to not remember anything.”

“Can you tell me about...us?”

He smiled. “What do you want to know?”

“So much.” I felt like laughing and crying at how strange this felt, to have to ask my fiancé to tell me about everything he could about our relationship. “Let’s start at the beginning. How did we meet?”

“We met at work.”

“Where do we work?”

“Brady Global, Inc.”

I looked at him with wide-eyes. “*Brady* Global? You own the company?”

He grinned and nodded. “I’m the CEO of Brady Global. We hired you on as the V.P. of Marketing about a year and a half ago.”

I stared at him in surprise. “When did we start dating?”

He thought about it. “So you were in the coma for about four months, we were engaged for about a month before that, and we’d been dating for about eight months before that...so we started dating a little over a year ago.”

“So I was sleeping with my boss?” I looked at him, searching for answers.

“Well I prefer to be called your fiancé,” he teased. “But yes, I guess you can say you were sleeping with your boss.” He flashed me a warm, inviting smile.

I frowned.

“What’s wrong?” His expression immediately changed when he noticed my disappointment.

I faked a smile. “Nothing’s wrong. I’m fine.”

He smiled back and I saw his body relax.

For the rest of the ride to the house, we drove in silence. I closed my eyes, pretending to have fallen asleep so that Connor wouldn’t try to talk to me. I felt tired and unsure of this life that I couldn’t remember. I had lied to Connor. Something *was* wrong. I wondered what kind of person I was before I lost my memories. What kind of person slept with their boss after a few

months at a new job? I may not remember anything about my life, but I knew that sleeping with your boss was not the most appropriate and ethical thing to do. But I didn't want to voice out my concern to Connor. I wasn't sure how he would respond to it. He fell in love with the woman that I now questioned.

"Liv?" Connor's soft voice interrupted my thoughts. "We're home."

I opened my eyes and saw that Connor was standing by my opened passenger door, I looked around and noticed that we had pulled up in front of a building along a small street, lined with beautifully-aged brownstone houses.

"Where are we?"

"We're in the Rittenhouse Square neighborhood in Philly."

"This is where we live?"

"Yup." Connor held out his hand and I reached for it. When he pulled me out of the car, I gasped at what my eyes saw. We were parked in front of a gorgeous three-story beaux arts mansion with antique limestone façade.

"We have a unit in this building?" I stared at the massive building in front of me and noticed a doorman at the front door waiting for our arrival.

"No," he laughed.

"Oh." I frowned and felt a wave of disappointment and embarrassment for thinking that we did.

"The entire place is ours," he corrected.

I turned and looked at him in disbelief. I may not have my personal memories, but I did know a few things. I knew the Rittenhouse Square area of Philly was one of the most expensive neighborhoods in Philly, and this mansion was easily worth over \$10 million. "The entire place?"

He nodded and beamed at me. "Now, come on. Let's get you inside."

As we walked toward the front door, the man at the door opened the door. “Good afternoon, Ms. Stuart. It’s so good to see you home.”

“Thanks.” I smiled at him and couldn’t believe he knew my name.

“I’m the butler of the house, Ms. Stuart. If you need anything, please don’t hesitate to ask.”

“Oh. Thanks.” I fidgeted uncomfortably.

“Thanks, Jim. And if you could have Bill drive the Aston to my garage, that’d be great.”

I stared at Connor in disbelief. “Bill?”

“Oh yes, Bill’s my personal assistant.”

“Right. Of course.” I wasn’t sure what else to say. *How rich is this guy?* The thought made me a little uncomfortable. I wasn’t sure why but when I imagined a place I’d call home, I imagined a warm, inviting apartment, not a large, cold, mansion.

But when we walked through the foyer and into the living room, I was pleasantly surprised and a smile crept onto my face. The interior was nothing like what I had expected from the outside. The decor was modern, chic, and casual with pops of colors. There was something comforting and familiar about the space and I immediately knew that I had decorated this place.

“Does anything look familiar?”

I smiled. “I don’t remember anything, but it feels familiar.” I looked at him. “Does that sound crazy?”

“Not at all.” He flashed me a warm smile. “I just want you to be comfortable here in your own house.”

“Thanks.”

“Oh yeah, I think Anna’s stopping by sometime this after to see you. She might be able to answer any questions you might have.”

“Anna?”

“Sorry, Liv. I forgot I hadn’t mentioned her to you yet. She’s your best friend.”

“Oh. My best friend.” I felt a pang of sadness knowing there was another important person in my life that I couldn’t remember.

“Are you hungry? Thirsty?” he asked as he lead me to the kitchen.

“Maybe just some water.” I looked around the brightly-lit kitchen. The afternoon sun was coming through the French doors that lead out to the terrace. I walked over to the terrace and beamed as my eyes landed on the beautiful flower garden in the backyard.

“Who maintains the garden?”

“You do.” Connor handed me my glass of water.

“That sounds right.” I smiled at him and then looked back toward the garden. I didn’t know how I knew, but I knew that I enjoyed gardening.

“Oh yeah. I also had Debra set up one of the guest rooms for me to sleep in for now. You can take our bedroom. I know you still are adjusting and I don’t want you to feel uncomfortable in any way. I…”

I looked over at him and felt grateful for how sweet and patient he was with me. “Connor, I don’t want to have to kick you out of your own bed.”

He laughed. “Don’t worry. I think I can manage in the King-size bed in the guest room.”

Even though he was all smiles, I could sense something less happy behind his laughter. “I know this can’t be easy for you.”

“Thank you for understanding.”

“I’m just so glad you’re back home, Liv.” He pulled me into his embrace.

I closed my eyes and allowed myself to sink into his arms. I inhaled the faint scent of his aftershave, hoping it would trigger a memory.

Just then I heard a bark and the sound of paws running across the hardwood floor toward us. Before I could turn to see what it was, something jumped at me and nipped at my ankle.

“Ow!” I cried out and took a step back.

“Scooter! Don’t be a bad boy.” Connor picked up the small Jack Russell terrier off the ground and gave it a kiss. “Liv’s home. Play nice.” He walked over toward me. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine.” I grinned at Scooter and reached over to scratch his head. Scooter growled at me and jumped off Connor and ran out of the room. I frowned and looked over at Connor.

“Sorry about that. He’s a bit territorial. Give him some time and he’ll become familiar with you again.”

I nodded in understanding. “Sure. I guess I have been away from him for four months. When did we get him?”

“Actually I’ve had Scooter for almost eight years now. I got him when he was just a puppy.”

“Oh.” I now understood what Connor meant when he said Scooter was possessive. He was Connor’s dog, not *ours*. *Is that why Scooter didn’t seem to care for me?*

Before I could ask Connor more about the dog, there was a buzz and a small video screen next to the phone on the kitchen counter turned on, showing a live stream of the front door where Jim stood.

“Mr. Brady? Ms. Peters is here to see Ms. Stuart.”

“Thanks, Jim. Please let her in.” Connor turned to me. “Anna’s here. Do you want me to keep you company or do you want to catch up with her by yourself?”

“I’d like to get to know her by myself if that’s okay.”

“Of course. I have a lot of work to catch up on. So I’ll be on my laptop in the dining room. If you need anything, just let me know.” Connor walked over and kissed me gently on the cheeks.

“Sure. Thank you.” I smiled at him.

Seconds later, a redhead in a bright yellow sundress walked into the kitchen.

“Oh my gosh, Liv! It’s so good to see you awake! How are you feeling?” The bubbly redhead ran toward me with her arms outstretched to hug me.

“Hi.” I gave her an uncomfortable smile.

She didn’t notice my unease as she flung her arms around me and hugged me tightly. “I was so worried.”

When she finally pulled away and I saw tears developing in her eyes. “I…”

“Oh my, sorry! How could I be such an airhead?” She made a face and lowered her voice. “Connor told me that you don’t remember anything yet.” She outstretched her hand. “I’m Anna, your best friend.” She beamed at me with pride as if she had just told me she was an Olympic gold medalist.

I smiled at her, knowing that there was something about her carefree and happy personality that made me feel at ease with. I shook her hand, immediately realizing how awkward this might be for her to be shaking hands with her best friend in such a formal way.

“So how are you feeling?” She wrapped her arms around my arm as she walked us toward the living room.

“It’s been okay. I’m still trying to adjust.”

She shook her head and looked at me like I was a wounded puppy. “How’s Connor been treating you?” She looked over at Connor who looked up at that moment from his laptop in the dining room. “He better not be acting like a jerk or he’ll have to answer to me.” She made her comments intentionally loud enough for Connor to hear.

“Hey, this isn’t fair. You’ve been here for how many minutes and it’s already turning into a Connor Roast?”

Anna snorted and rolled her eyes. “If you’ve been treating my girl right, then there won’t be a Connor Roast.”

He laughed. “Okay. Touché. Well I’ll let you girls catch up. I need to head into the office to grab some documents.” He closed his laptop and packed it into his briefcase. He walked over to us and leaned down and kissed me on the forehead. “You okay here with Anna? I’ll be back in a few hours.”

I smiled up at him and nodded. “I think so.”

“Don’t worry, Mr. Brady. I’ll take care of your wonderful fiancée. I promise not to feed her too many negative stories about you.”

He laughed and rolled his eyes. “Have a fun time, ladies.” He met my eyes and his expression softened. “Call me if you need anything, okay?”

I nodded.

After I heard the front door close behind Connor, I turned to Anna. “Does Connor not treat me well?”

She laughed. “Girl, I was joking around. Connor treats you like a princess.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, of course!” She then frowned. “Why? Has he not been treating you well?”

“No, no, no. He has. That’s not what I meant. I think I just took your joking earlier seriously.” I let out a sigh. “Sorry, I’m still trying to figure things out.”

“I totally understand, Liv. I just can’t imagine what you’re going through.”

“I…” I paused. It seemed weird to be talking to this girl who knew me so well but I had no memory of. “Can I ask you something, Anna?”

“Of course, sweetie. Fire away.”

“Can you tell me about my relationship with Connor?”

“Sure.” She scrunched her face together as she thought about where to start. “What would you like to know?” she finally asked.

“Well...” There had been something that’d been nagging at me since the car ride home. “Connor had mentioned today that he’s my boss and we met at work.”

“Yeah, that’s right.”

“Did I...What kind of person was I? How did I...did I do anything inappropriate—I mean, how did it all happen? How did I start dating my boss?” I stumbled over my sentences as I felt my face grow hot with shame. I may not remember anything about my life, but I knew that sleeping with your boss was not the most appropriate and ethical thing to do. As if a light flicked on in her head, Anna began to laugh. “Oh sweetie, relax. You did nothing inappropriate.”

I looked at her hopefully. “How do you know?”

“Because I work there too. That’s how we met. I’m one of the investment bankers at the company.”

“Oh.”

“Don’t worry, Liv. No one at work thinks you started dating Connor to get ahead. You are one of the hardest working people at Brady Global. You really don’t need any extra help to get ahead. Trust me, everyone loves you at work. In fact, everyone actually thinks you and Connor are like the perfect couple. You’re both hot, smart, and hardworking. It was actually your hard work and dedication to the company that first caught Connor’s attention.”

“Why do you say that?”

“Well, you were one of the few people who seemed to stay at work until ten or eleven at night every single night. You had told me that you had bumped into Connor a few times in the elevators while you were leaving the building late at night. After a while you guys were having dinner breaks together in the conference room several evenings every week. That’s when he

really started to pursue you. You told me that he asked you to join him for dinners and drinks outside of the office on several occasions. But in the beginning you kept saying no because you thought it was inappropriate. You also seemed to have reservations about dating, period. You also seemed to want to consume yourself with work and nothing else. I think it was your own way of grieving over the loss of your mother.”

I frowned at the mention of my mother and I wished desperately that I could remember her.

“Anyway, Connor didn’t give up. You have to give the man some credit. He was certainly persistent and he kept wooing you. And after some time, you finally realized that there was something there between the two of you that you couldn’t deny. So you finally budged and agreed to go on a date with him. But before you did, and with your insistence, you guys went through the proper channels with the Human Resources department and signed some forms that disclosed your potential personal relationship.”

“That’s good.” I felt a sense of relief wash through me after hearing Anna’s recount of how I started dating Connor.

“So you see, sweetie, you have nothing to worry about.” She cocked her head and studied me. “Were you really worried?”

I looked at her and nodded sheepishly.

“Sweetie, you have nothing to worry about! Connor is great to you. Do you know he visited you at the hospital every single day for the last four months, waiting for the day you’d finally wake up?”

“He did?” I thought about Connor and smiled at how lucky I was to have him in my life.

“Darling, that man loves you to pieces!”

Just then, a memory flashed before my eyes and I was now standing at the front entrance of a nail salon.

“O.M.G.! You’re engaged?” Anna squealed the minute she saw me walk inside the salon. *How she was able to spot my engagement ring within the first second of entering the salon is beyond me*, I thought as I looked down at the breathtaking, sparkling rock weighing down my left ring finger.

She grabbed my hand eagerly and pulled it up to her face, studying the ring closely. “Damn, not bad, Connor. Now *this* is what an engagement ring should look like.”

I laughed. “You don’t think it’s a bit flashy?” I looked at her, waiting for her approval.

“For the future Mrs. Connor Brady, one of the richest and youngest CEOs in the U.S.? No, this will do perfectly.” She looked back at the ring, mesmerized by it. “It’s gorgeous.” Finally pulling her eyes off the ring, she looked up at me, grinning ear to ear. “So how do you feel?”

“Happy, but still a bit in shock to be honest.”

“O.M.G. Let me get some photos of it.”

Before I could protest, Anna had already pulled out her phone and was snapping away at the ring.

I giggled. “Why are you taking photos of it? I don’t know if I want it up on Facebook or Instagram.”

“Why do you always have to be so modest, Liv! Sometimes you gotta flaunt what your mama gave yah! And in this case, flaunt that ginormous rock that your rich, powerful fiancé gave you.” She continued to snap away.

“Come on, Anna. You know I’m not into posting this kind of stuff on social media.”

“You and your modesty, Liv.” She rolled her eyes. “Don’t worry. I wasn’t actually planning on posting these anywhere.”

“Oh? What are you doing with them?” I eyed her suspiciously, knowing when she was scheming something.

She laughed. “I’m going to figure out a way for Rich to see them while I’m gushing over your ring to him. If that isn’t a hint, I don’t know what is.”

“Liv?”

Suddenly the salon disappeared and I was back in the living room with Anna.

“Did you say something?” I asked as I rubbed my head.

“Yeah. I called your name, but you looked like you were spaced out. Are you okay?”

I smiled. “I’m okay. I just had a flashback of us.” Excitement ran through me as another memory—a happy one—filled my near-empty mind.

“Oh?” Her eyes lit up. “What did you remember?”

“Of us—when I met you in the nail salon and you saw my ring for the first time.”

“Now that was a great memory to get back!”

I laughed at Anna’s genuine excitement for me, a level of excitement that rivaled my own. I instantly knew why we were best friends and why I must have loved her so much.

“Damn, Liv. It’s just so great to finally see you! You have no idea how much I’ve missed you in the last four months.” She reached for my hands and squeezed them. “You know, I had visited you in the hospital right after your accident and it was so difficult to see you lying there completely motionless...” Anna’s voice cracked.

“Were you there that night?”

She nodded as tears welled up in her eyes. “It was horrible. I can’t believe how fast it all had happened. I remember that I had been talking to you maybe only twenty minutes before your accident. You had gone to look for Connor in one of the other rooms and then less than half an hour later I heard all the sirens.”

“Oh really?”

“Yeah, it was your engagement party, and probably the most fabulous party I’ve ever attended. *Everyone* who’s anyone was there. And honey, you were so beautiful that night. You looked so happy.”

“I was?” I looked at her wistfully, wishing that I could remember being as happy as she’d remembered me to be.

“You and Connor were just so happy.” She shook her head as she thought back to that night. “I’ve never seen Connor look so happy and then so devastated before in the same night.”

“Did you see me after...after I was hit?” I felt my chest constrict as I imagined what it felt like to be hit by a car.

“Only briefly from a distance. I was inside when it happened and I didn’t know what had happened until I heard the sirens outside. By the time I ran out, the area was blocked off and all I could see was Connor by your side with two paramedics putting you on a stretcher. I will never forget the look on his face. I’ve always seen him calm and collected. But that night...he was white as a sheet and sick with worry.”

Tears cascaded down my face as I pictured the scene in my mind. I thought about how it must have felt to be in Connor’s position. To watch the one you love being taken away like I had. My heart ached at the idea.

I thought about everything Anna had just told me about Connor and our relationship together and it was then that I reached for my phone and sent Connor a text.

Me: Hi. Do you mind if we sleep in the same bed tonight?

To my surprise, he immediately responded back.

Connor: Really? Of course we can, but are you sure you’re okay with that?

Me: Yes. I know this must be hard for you too. I think being in the same bed with you could help me with my memories.

Connor: :) I agree. I’ll let Debra know.

Me: Could we take things slow though?

Connor: As slow as a snail if that’s what you need. ;)

Me: Haha. Thank you.

As I put away my phone and turned back to my conversation with Anna, I felt a renewed sense of hope. *I’m so lucky to have an amazing fiancé like Connor. I need to do everything I can to remember him.*