



From the MixCache.com library

SAMPLE COPY

Before We Are Ghosts

MixCache.com

SAMPLE COPY

Table of Contents

- **Introduction**
- **Chapter 1:** The Eerie Awakening
- **Chapter 2:** The Note Beside Me
- **Chapter 3:** Stranger in My Own Skin
- **Chapter 4:** Whispers About Leo
- **Chapter 5:** The Detective's Question
- **Chapter 6:** Pieces at the Shore
- **Chapter 7:** Reaching for Lost Time
- **Chapter 8:** The Café on Harbor Road
- **Chapter 9:** Faces I Should Know
- **Chapter 10:** A Visit to Yesterday
- **Chapter 11:** Shadows from the Clinic
- **Chapter 12:** Secret Smiles
- **Chapter 13:** The Neighbor's Window
- **Chapter 14:** Voices at Midnight
- **Chapter 15:** The Mirror Cracks
- **Chapter 16:** The Chase
- **Chapter 17:** Footprints and False Memories
- **Chapter 18:** Where Leo Waits
- **Chapter 19:** A Trap Set
- **Chapter 20:** Truths Buried Deep
- **Chapter 21:** The Return
- **Chapter 22:** Out from the Fog
- **Chapter 23:** Reckoning
- **Chapter 24:** The Last Lie
- **Chapter 25:** Before We Are Ghosts

SAMPLE COPY

Introduction

I wake surrounded by whispers—shreds of memory, old fears, the hush of the ocean beyond city glass. A pulse thrums in my ears. The air is thick with salt and something sour: panic. Beneath my trembling hands, I feel the cool unfamiliarity of a bed I don't recognize. There's a shape on the nightstand, a folded scrap of paper. The black ink is shaky, blotted, written by fingers that seemed to know they were running out of time: "Trust no one but yourself."

That single sentence blooms in my mind like a bruise. My name, Isla Turner, means little in this fog. I recall flashes: rain on black stone, Leo's half-smile vanishing into shadows, the way strangers look away when your grief is made public. But when I try to reach the gap—those missing months behind me—my vision flickers white. I find unfamiliar keys in my pocket. In the mirror, my hair's grown longer than I remember. There are bruises I can't explain.

Nothing fits. Not the photographs of us smiling, me and Leo—framed and dusted, but wrong. Not the texts from people claiming to care, their words edged with urgency or careful suspicion. The world outside this window spins on, but every headline, every whispered conversation in the market, returns to the same question: Where is Leo Mason?

My friends think I know more than I say. The detective asks softly about old arguments and travel plans as if I could will myself into remembering. But each revelation tangles tighter: the possibility that the truth is something I don't want to face, that perhaps I am as much a threat to myself as any stranger lurking in alleyways.

A city hunts for answers, fixated on the loss of a man who left as many secrets behind as I did. I'm haunted not by what I have lost, but by the uncanny sense that all I have left—my own thoughts, my identity—could be the biggest lie of all. What if I was complicit in whatever happened to Leo, or worse, the architect of my own forgetting?

As dawn claws pale gold through gray clouds, I decide: I will find out what happened, even if it destroys me. Because when your story is riddled with missing pieces, and the ghosts of your past circle like vultures, the only way to survive is to uncover who you really are—before you become a ghost yourself.

CHAPTER ONE: The Eerie Awakening

The first thing I registered was the taste of copper, sharp and metallic, coating my tongue. Then the blinding white light of the ceiling, a perfect, unblemished rectangle. It took a few more agonizing seconds for my eyes to focus, to confirm that this wasn't my ceiling. My ceiling, in my apartment with Leo, had a water stain shaped vaguely like a dragon. This one was pristine, a featureless expanse that mirrored the blank slate of my mind.

My head throbbed with a dull, persistent ache, like a drum being played deep within my skull. I tried to sit up, but my muscles screamed in protest, a foreign soreness radiating from my core. It felt as though I'd run a marathon, or perhaps been hit by a very slow, very large truck. Disoriented, I let my gaze drift around the room, hoping for a clue, any scrap of familiarity.

It was a studio apartment, modern and minimalist, nothing like the cozy, slightly cluttered haven Leo and I had built. The walls were a cool, impersonal gray. A sleek, almost sculptural lamp stood in one corner, casting an artificial glow that made everything feel sterile. A small kitchenette was tucked against one wall, featuring gleaming steel appliances that looked like they'd never seen a single dirty dish.

My heart began to hammer, a frantic bird trapped in my ribs. Where was I? More importantly, *who* was I? The name Isla Turner floated up, a fragment of identity, but it felt hollow, disconnected. Like remembering a character from a book you'd read years ago. I knew that name was mine, but the person it belonged to was a stranger.

A shudder ran through me, cold despite the warmth of the duvet. I threw it back, revealing a pair of unfamiliar silk pajamas. Not mine. My wardrobe consisted mostly of well-worn jeans and oversized sweaters. These were elegant, expensive. I ran a hand over the smooth fabric, a strange sense of detachment settling over me. It was like observing a scene in a movie, not living it.

My bare feet hit the cool laminate floor. Every step was tentative, as if testing a new limb. I made my way to the window, drawn by the faint sounds of the city outside. Pulling back the heavy blackout curtains, I blinked against the sudden onslaught of light. Below, the city unfurled, a sprawling tapestry of concrete and glass. Familiar, yet distant.

This was definitely Havenwood. The sprawling harbor, dotted with fishing boats and sleek yachts, gleamed under the morning sun. The old clock tower, a beloved landmark, stood tall in the distance. I knew this city. I'd grown up here. But the

specific angle, the particular array of buildings before me, meant I was somewhere I'd never been before.

A knot of dread tightened in my stomach. I turned from the window, desperate for anything that might ground me. That's when I saw it. On the small, minimalist nightstand beside the bed, a single piece of paper, folded precisely. My breath hitched. This was it. The key.

My fingers trembled as I reached for it. The paper felt slightly rough, like recycled stock. I unfolded it carefully, my eyes scanning the handwritten message, the ink stark black against the white.

"Trust no one but yourself."

Four words. Simple, yet they detonated in my mind, sending shards of fear ricocheting through me. Who wrote this? Why? And why was I being warned against everyone else? The implication was chilling: someone out there was lying, and I was in danger.

I crumpled the note in my hand, then smoothed it out again, reading it repeatedly, as if different meanings might emerge with each pass. My gaze fell to the bedside table again. Next to the note was a small, ornate silver locket. It was open, revealing two miniature photographs. On one side, a smiling man with kind eyes and a crooked grin - Leo. On the other, a woman I almost recognized - myself, but with a vibrancy, a carefree expression I couldn't recall ever possessing.

The locket was cold in my palm. Leo. The name resonated with a strange echo, a ghost of an emotion I couldn't quite grasp. Love? Loss? Something deeper, more complicated. My fiancé. The word felt like a title rather than a lived reality.

I fumbled in the pockets of the silk pajamas. Nothing. Then I remembered the introduction, a fleeting flash of information. My jeans. I found them folded neatly on a chair by the foot of the bed, along with a simple white t-shirt and my worn sneakers. It was a strange juxtaposition - the expensive pajamas and my everyday clothes, as if I'd been here for a long time, yet was still just passing through.

My fingers plunged into the front pocket of the jeans. The metallic clink was a small victory. Keys. A small keyring with a faded blue charm - a stylized wave. And a single, small silver key. Not my apartment key. Not the one I remembered.

I walked to the small bathroom, the strange weight of the keys in my hand. The mirror above the sink reflected a stranger. My hair was longer, yes, but it was also a different shade, a rich chestnut I vaguely remembered trying once, years ago. Not the blonde I had recently settled on. And my face... it was thinner, almost gaunt. There were faint shadows under my eyes, and a small, purplish bruise on my left temple, partially

concealed by my hairline.

I touched the bruise gingerly. It didn't hurt, not really, but the sight of it sent another jolt of unease through me. How did I get it? What had happened? The missing year yawned before me, a terrifying abyss.

A sudden, sharp memory flickered: the acrid smell of burnt rubber, the screech of tires, then darkness. It was gone as quickly as it came, leaving me breathless and dizzy. Was that the cause of the bruise? An accident? But why couldn't I remember anything else?

I splashed cold water on my face, the chill doing little to clear the fog in my mind. The note's words echoed: "Trust no one but yourself." But what if the person I trusted least was me? What if I was the architect of my own amnesia, hiding from something too terrible to face?

A faint hum broke the silence of the apartment – a phone. It lay on the sleek kitchen counter, glowing with an incoming call. The caller ID simply read: "Unknown Number." My heart pounded. Was this a trap? Was it the person who wrote the note? Or someone else entirely?

I hesitated, my hand hovering over the screen. Every instinct screamed at me to answer, to find an answer, any answer. But the warning was clear. Trust no one. Especially not when the world felt like a meticulously crafted lie, and I was the only one who didn't know the script. The phone rang again, insistent. And with each ring, the blank space of the missing year felt less like an empty void and more like a carefully constructed wall, designed to keep something terrible in—or out.

This is a sample preview. Purchase the book to read the full content.

Visit MixCache.com to purchase the complete book.

SAMPLE COPY