



## Someone to Kiss My Scars

**Brooke Skipstone**

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*Someone to Kiss My Scars is a fresh suspense novel: swift, eventful, and with a satisfying love story underlying it all.*

Lost memories and the pain of recovering them are a playing field for suspense in Brooke Skipstone's taut new adult thriller, *Someone to Kiss My Scars*.

Hunter's mother and younger brother died in a car accident a few years ago—or so his father told him when they moved to Alaska. Seventeen-year-old Hunter has no memories of life before the move, and has begun having PTSD-like visions of sexual abuse that make him question his father's explanation. He confides in best friend Jazz, a science-minded girl with a nerd's knowledge of how memory works.

As children of dysfunctional single parents, Hunter and Jazz learned to rely on themselves. They sense hidden wounds in each other that lead to a strong mutual bond. Hunter's fears that he may have abused others weighs heavier than fears that he himself was victimized, yet his determination to find answers doesn't waver. Jazz, unlike Hunter, remembers in heartbreaking detail the price of growing up with an alcoholic mother who couldn't protect her. Though she understands Hunter's desire to retrieve his memories, she realizes the pain it will bring and feels protective toward him. Hunter and Jazz's relationship moves beyond friendship toward something deeper.

Hunter's father and Jazz's mother emerge as important characters as the story unfolds; neither has the moral courage their children do, but they're presented as flawed, realistic characters, rather than villains. Characters are developed through their actions and by insights into incidents in their pasts. Dialogue is realistic, enhancing the story by contrasting what is said with what is withheld.

The story builds suspense by including incidents that point to more than one possible explanation for Hunter's visions. What first seems to be a case of repressed memory later morphs toward paranormal explanations, while Jazz proposes research-based explanations that leave room for reality. Each thread is made believable through an interplay of incidents and characters, well integrated into the larger tale.

Suspense is always on the rise, and increases further when Hunter begins to have memories of his dead mother and forces a confession from his father. Small, satisfying revelations are mixed with clues that lead in other directions. Adding to the edgy atmosphere is the setting in remote, small-town Alaska, an isolated expanse where bored teens seek desperate outlets. False leads drop away in the end. The conclusion is cinematic, with a clear path forward.

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SUSAN WAGGONER (September 6, 2019)

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