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About the Author

IF WE EVER MEET AGAIN

One year, two hearts, and a love that will blindside and, ultimately, shatter them.

She's an aspiring interior designer who dreams of falling in love.

He's an ex-football star who thinks love is a con.

She's a virgin, and he doesn't do virgins.

He's cocky, infuriating, and not her type.

She wants the fairytale.

He wants freedom.

Blake and Farrah shouldn't have fallen for each other the way they did: totally, completely, and irrevocably.

Because they're studying abroad in Shanghai, and they only have one year.

Because forces at home threaten to rip them apart, even if they don't know it yet.

And because, eventually, they must face the most heartbreaking lesson they'll ever learn: sometimes, even the greatest love can't conquer all.

“The Hardest Thing”—98 Degrees

“Chances”—Backstreet Boys

“Free”—Brood

“Skyfall”—Adele

“Crush”—3G’s

“Ocean Eyes”—Billie Eilish

“Like You’ll Never See Me Again”—Alicia Keys

“Impossible”—Shontelle

“Moral of the Story”—Ashe

“I Never Told You”—Colbie Caillat

“Here’s to the Night”—Eve 6

“Glad You Came”—The Wanted

“The Time (Dirty Bit)”—Black Eyed Peas

“See You Again”—Charlie Puth & Wiz Khalifa

“Don’t Forget About Us”—Mariah Carey

“If We Ever Meet Again”—Katy Perry & Timbaland

Author's note: This is book one in a duet. It's a full-length novel with no sudden cliffhangers, but Blake and Farrah's story continues in book two, If the Sun Never Sets (coming July 2020). HEA guaranteed in book two.

PROLOGUE

This would kill him.

It didn't matter how much he prepared; these next thirty minutes were going to rip his heart out and pulverize it.

It was inevitable.

"We haven't talked in a while." She sounded equal parts accusing and uncertain.

He didn't blame her. If he were in her shoes, he would've given up on himself a long time ago. She hadn't, which made him love her even more, but her loyalty made this conversation all the harder.

He rested his forearms on his knees and clasped his hands together. He focused on the grain of the wood floors beneath his feet until it swirled in front of his eyes.

"I've been busy."

"With?"

"Classes. Bar plans. That sort of thing."

"You'll have to do better than that."

His head snapped up at the sharpness in her voice. Looking at her turned out to be a mistake.

His chest squeezed at the sight of her face and the hurt swimming in those beautiful brown eyes. It'd been two weeks since they were last alone together, but it may as well have been two lifetimes.

His dread mixed with a strange exhilaration at being alone with her again, and it took all of his willpower not to sweep her up in his arms and never let go.

"Tell me the truth." Her voice softened. "You can trust me."

It would be so easy to pretend everything was fine. To give her the reassurances she wanted to hear and go back to the way things were.

He did trust her—but the truth would shatter her.

So he did the only thing he could do: he lied.

"I'm sorry." He wiped the emotion from his voice and funneled it into the pit of despair swirling in his stomach. Could she hear it? The panicked *thump-thump-thump* of his heart beating against his ribcage, screaming at him to stop? "I didn't want to do it like this, but I don't think we should see each other anymore."

Farrah's face paled. His heart beat louder.

"What?"

He swallowed hard. "It was fun while it lasted, but the year is almost over and I—I'm not interested anymore. I'm sorry."

Liar.

"You're lying."

He flinched. She knew him well. Too well.

"I'm not." He tried to sound nonchalant when all he wanted to do was fall to his knees and beg her not to leave him.

"You are. You said you loved me."

"I lied."

He couldn't look her in the eyes.

Her sharp inhale twisted his heart into a painful knot.

"You're full of shit." Her voice quavered. "Look at you, you're shaking."

He clenched his hands into fists and forced his body to still. “Farrah.” *This was it.* His breath came out in short, shallow bursts. “I got back with my ex-girlfriend over the holidays. I didn’t know how to tell you. I love her, and I made a mistake here, with us. But I’m trying to fix it.”

Her sob ripped through the air. Tears stung his eyes, but he blinked them back.

“I’m sorry.” Such a stupid, inadequate thing to say. He didn’t know why he said it.

“Stop saying that!”

He flinched at the venom in her voice. She clutched her necklace with one hand, betrayal swirling in her eyes.

“It was all a lie then, this past year.”

He dropped his gaze again.

“Why? Why did you pretend you cared? Was it some sick joke? You wanted to see whether I’d be gullible enough to fall for you? Well, congratu-fucking-lations. You won. Blake Ryan, the champion. Your father was right. You shouldn’t have quit. No one plays the game better than you.”

So this was what dying felt like. The pain, frozen inside like a lump of jagged black ice. The regret over words he couldn’t say and promises he couldn’t keep. The loneliness as he slid into dark, starless oblivion with no one left to save him.

“I’m sor—”

“If you say ‘I’m sorry’ one more time, I’ll go to the kitchen, come back, and cut your balls off with a rusty knife. In fact, I may do that anyway. You’re a fucking asshole. *I’m* sorry I wasted all this time on you, and I’m sorrier for your girlfriend. She deserves better.”

God, he didn’t want her to leave hating him. He wanted, more than anything, to tell her it was all a joke and that he was messing with her. He wanted to grab her and breathe in that orange blossom and vanilla scent that drove him crazy, to confess how head over heels he was for her and to kiss her until they ran out of breath.

But he couldn't. The first part would be a lie and the second…well, that was something he could never do again.

Farrah walked to the door. She paused in the doorway to look back at him. He expected her to hurl more venom at him—he deserved it. But she didn't. Instead, she turned away and closed the door behind her with a soft "click" that echoed in the silence like a gunshot.

His shoulders sagged. All the energy drained out of him.

It was over. There was no going back.

It was the right thing to do, and yet…

He squeezed his eyes shut, trying to block out the pain. He couldn't get the image of her face out of his mind, the one that said she thought so little of him she didn't want to waste any more energy yelling at him.

Because of her, he believed in love. The kind of knock-you-down, once-in-a-lifetime-love he used to dismiss as a fantasy concocted by Hollywood to sell movies. It wasn't a fantasy. It was real. He felt it to his core.

If only they'd met sooner, or under different circumstances…

He'd always been a practical person, and there was no use dwelling on what-ifs. Duty bound him to someone else, and sooner or later, Farrah would move on and meet a guy who could give her everything she deserved. Someone she would love, marry, and have kids with…

The last intact piece of his heart shattered at the thought. The shards pricked at his self-control until he could no longer hold back the tears. Huge, silent sobs wracked his body for the first time since he was seven, when he'd fallen out of a tree and broken his leg. Only this time, the pain was a million times worse.

All their moments together flashed through his mind, and the boy who'd once sworn he would never cry over a girl… cried.

He cried because he'd hurt her.