

we'll
always
have
summer

Also by Jenny Han

It's Not Summer Without You
The Summer I Turned Pretty
Shug

a summer novel

we'll
always
have
summer

JENNY HAN

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For my two Emilys:
Emily van Beek, you are my ambassador of quan
Emily Thomas Meehan, let's stay together forever
love, your girl



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On Wednesday nights when I was little, my mom and I would watch old musicals. It was our thing. Sometimes my dad or Steven would wander in and watch for a bit, but it was pretty much always my mother and me on the couch with a blanket and a bowl of sweet and salty popcorn, every Wednesday. We watched *The Music Man*, *West Side Story*, *Meet Me in St. Louis*, all of which I liked, *Singin' in the Rain*, which I really liked. But I loved none of them the way I loved *Bye Bye Birdie*. Of all the musicals, *Bye Bye Birdie* was my number one favorite. I watched it again and again, as many times as my mother could stand. Just like Kim MacAfee before me, I wanted to wear mascara and lipstick and heels and have that “happy grown-up female feeling,” I wanted to

hear boys whistle and know it was for me. I wanted to grow up and be just like Kim, because she got to have all of those things.

And after, when it was bedtime, I would sing, “We love you, Conrad, oh yes we do. We love you, Conrad, and we’ll be true” into the bathroom mirror with a mouthful of toothpaste. I would sing my eight-nine-ten-year-old heart out. But I wasn’t singing to Conrad Birdie. I was singing to *my* Conrad. Conrad Beck Fisher, the boy of my preteen dreams.

I’ve only ever loved two boys—both of them with the last name Fisher. Conrad was first, and I loved him in a way that you can really only do the first time around. It’s the kind of love that doesn’t know better and doesn’t want to—it’s dizzy and foolish and fierce. That kind of love is really a one-time-only thing.

And then there was Jeremiah. When I looked at Jeremiah, I saw past, present, and future. He didn’t just know the girl I used to be. He knew the right-now me, and he loved me anyway.

My two great loves. I think I always knew I would be Belly Fisher one day. I just didn’t know it was going to happen like this.



chapter one

When it's finals week and you've been studying for five hours straight, you need three things to get you through the night. The biggest Slurpee you can find, half cherry, half Coke. Pajama pants, the kind that have been washed so many times, they are tissue-paper thin. And finally, dance breaks. Lots of dance breaks. When your eyes start to close and all you want is your bed, dance breaks will get you through.

It was four in the morning, and I was studying for the last final of my freshman year at Finch University. I was camped out in my dorm library with my new best friend, Anika Johnson, and my old best friend, Taylor Jewel. Summer vacation was so close, I could almost taste it. Just five more days. I'd been counting down since April.

"Quiz me," Taylor commanded, her voice scratchy.

I opened my notebook to a random page. “Define *anima* versus *animus*.”

Taylor chewed on her lower lip. “Give me a hint.”

“Umm . . . think Latin,” I said.

“I didn’t take Latin! Is there going to be Latin on this exam?”

“No, I was just trying to give you a hint. Because in Latin boys’ names end in *-us* and girls’ names end in *-a*, and *anima* is feminine archetype and *animus* is masculine archetype. Get it?”

She let out a big sigh. “No. I’m probably going to fail.”

Looking up from her notebook, Anika said, “Maybe if you stopped texting and started studying, you wouldn’t.”

Taylor glared at her. “I’m helping my big sister plan our end-of-year breakfast, so I have to be on call tonight.”

“On call?” Anika looked amused. “Like a doctor?”

“Yes, just like a doctor,” Taylor snapped.

“So, will it be pancakes or waffles?”

“French toast, thank you very much.”

The three of us were all taking the same freshman psych class, and Taylor’s and my exam was tomorrow, Anika’s was the day after. Anika was my closest friend at school besides Taylor. Seeing as how Taylor was competitive by nature, it was a friendship that she was more than a little jealous of, not that she’d ever in a million years admit it.

My friendship with Anika was different from my

friendship with Taylor. Anika was laid-back and easy to be with. She wasn't quick to judge. More than all that, though, she gave *me* the space to be different. She hadn't known me my whole life, so she had no expectations or preconceptions. There was freedom in that. And she wasn't like any of my friends back home. She was from New York, and her father was a jazz musician and her mother was a writer.

A couple of hours later, the sun was rising and casting the room in a bluish light, and Taylor's head was down, while Anika was staring off into space like a zombie.

I rolled up two paper balls in my lap and threw them at my two friends. "Dance break," I sang out as I pressed play on my computer. I did a little shimmy in my chair.

Anika glared at me. "Why are you so chipper?"

"Because," I said, clapping my hands together, "in just a few hours, it will all be over." My exam wasn't until one in the afternoon, so my plan was to go back to my room and sleep for a couple of hours, then wake up with time to spare and study some more.

I overslept, but I still managed to get another hour of studying in. I didn't have time to go to the dining hall for breakfast, so I just drank a Cherry Coke from the vending machine.

The test was as hard as we had expected, but I was pretty sure I would get at least a B. Taylor was pretty sure

she hadn't failed, which was good. Both of us were too tired to celebrate after, so we just high-fived and went our separate ways.

I headed back to my dorm room, ready to pass out until at least dinnertime, and when I opened the door, there was Jeremiah, asleep in my bed. He looked like a little boy when he slept, even with the stubble. He was stretched out on top of my comforter, his feet hanging over the edge of the bed, my stuffed polar bear hugged to his chest.

I took off my shoes and crawled into my twin, extra-long bed next to him. He stirred, opened his eyes, and said, "Hi."

"Hi," I said.

"How'd it go?"

"Pretty good."

"Good." He let go of Junior Mint and hugged me to him. "I brought you the other half of my sub from lunch."

"You're sweet," I said, burrowing my head in his shoulder.

He kissed my hair. "I can't have my girl skipping meals left and right."

"It was just breakfast," I said. As an afterthought, I added, "And lunch."

"Do you want my sub now? It's in my book bag."

Now that I thought about it, I was hungry, but I was also sleepy. "Maybe a little later," I said, closing my eyes.

Then he fell back to sleep, and I fell asleep too. When I woke up, it was dark out, Junior Mint was on the floor, and Jeremiah's arms were around me. He was still asleep.

We had started dating right before I began senior year of high school. "Dating" didn't feel like the right word for it. We were just together. It all happened so easily and so quickly that it felt like it had always been that way. One minute we were friends, then we were kissing, and then the next thing I knew, I was applying to the same college as him. I told myself and everyone else (including him, including my mother especially) that it was a good school, that it was only a few hours from home and it made sense to apply there, that I was keeping my options open. All of those things were true. But truest of all was that I just wanted to be near him. I wanted him for all seasons, not just summer.

Now here we were, lying next to each other in my dorm-room bed. He was a sophomore, and I was finishing up my freshman year. It was crazy how far we had come. We'd known each other our whole lives, and in some ways, it felt like a big surprise—in other ways it felt inevitable.



chapter two

Jeremiah's fraternity was throwing an end-of-year party. In less than a week we would all go home for the summer, and we wouldn't be back at Finch until the end of August. I had always loved summertime best of all, but now that I was finally going home, somehow it felt a little bittersweet. I was used to meeting Jeremiah in the dining hall for breakfast every morning and doing my laundry with him at his frat house late at night. He was good at folding my T-shirts.

This summer, he would be interning at his dad's company again, and I was going to waitress at a family restaurant called Behrs, the same as I did last summer. Our plan was to meet at the summer house in Cousins as often as we could. Last summer we hadn't made it out there once. We'd both been so busy with our jobs.

I took every shift I could to save money for school. All the while, I'd felt a little hollow inside, my first summer away from Cousins.

There were a few lightning bugs out. It was just getting dark, and it wasn't too hot of a night. I was wearing heels, which was stupid, since on a last-minute impulse I'd walked instead of taking the bus. I just figured it was the last time for a long time I'd walk across campus on a nice night like this.

I'd invited Anika and our friend Shay to come with me, but Anika had a party with her dance team, and Shay was already done with finals and had flown home to Texas. Taylor's sorority was having a mixer, so she wasn't coming either. It was just me and my sore feet.

I had texted Jeremiah to tell him I was on my way and that I was walking, so it would take me a little while. I had to keep stopping to adjust my shoes because they were cutting into the backs of my feet. Heels were dumb, I decided.

Halfway there, I saw him sitting on my favorite bench. He stood up when he saw me. "Surprise!"

"You didn't have to meet me," I said, feeling very happy he had. I sat down on the bench.

"You look hot," he said.

Even now, after being boyfriend and girlfriend for a whole two years, I still blushed a little when he said things like that. "Thanks," I said. I was wearing a sundress that

I had borrowed from Anika. It was white with little blue flowers and ruffly straps.

“That dress reminds me of *The Sound of Music*, but in a hot way.”

“Thanks,” I said again. *Did* the dress make me look like Fräulein Maria, I wondered? That didn’t sound like a good thing. I smoothed down the straps a little.

A couple of guys I didn’t recognize stopped and said hi to Jeremiah, but I stayed put on the bench so I could rest my feet.

When they were gone, he said, “Ready?”

I groaned. “My feet are killing me. Heels are dumb.”

Jeremiah stooped down low and said, “Hop on, girl.”

Giggling, I climbed on his back. I always giggled when he called me “girl.” I couldn’t help it. It was funny.

He hoisted me up and I put my arms around his neck. “Is your dad coming on Monday?” Jeremiah asked as we crossed the main lawn.

“Yeah. You’re gonna help, right?”

“Come on, now. I’m carrying you across campus. I have to help you move, too?”

I swatted him on the head and he ducked. “Okay, okay,” he said.

Then I blew a raspberry on his neck, and he yelped like a little girl. I laughed the whole way there.



chapter *three*

At Jeremiah's fraternity house, the doors were wide open and people were hanging out on the front lawn. Multicolored Christmas lights were haphazardly strung all over the place—on the mailbox, the front porch, even along the edge of the walkway. They had three inflatable kiddie pools set up that people were lounging in like they were in hot tubs. Guys were running around with Super Soakers and spraying beer into each other's mouths. Some of the girls were in their bikinis.

I hopped off Jeremiah's back and took my shoes off in the grass.

"The pledges did a nice job with this," Jeremiah said, nodding appreciatively at the kiddie pools. "Did you bring your suit?"

I shook my head.

“Want me to see if one of the girls has an extra?” he offered.

Quickly, I said, “No thanks.”

I knew Jeremiah’s fraternity brothers from hanging out at the house, but I didn’t know the girls very well. Most of them were from Zeta Phi, Jeremiah’s fraternity’s sister sorority. That meant they had mixers and parties together, that kind of thing. Jeremiah had wanted me to rush Zeta Phi, but I’d said no. I told him it was because I couldn’t afford the fees and paying extra to live in a sorority house, but it was really more that I was hoping to be friends with all kinds of girls, not just the ones I’d meet in a sorority. I wanted a broader college experience, like my mother was always saying. According to Taylor, Zeta Phi was for party girls and sluts, as opposed to her sorority, which was allegedly classier and more exclusive. And way more focused on community service, she’d added as an afterthought.

Girls kept coming up and hugging Jeremiah. They said hi to me, and I said hi back, then I went upstairs to put my bag in Jeremiah’s room. On my way downstairs, I saw her.

Lacie Barone, wearing skinny jeans and a silky tank top and patent leather red heels that probably brought her up to five-four at most, talking to Jeremiah. Lacie was the social chair of Zeta Phi, and she was a junior—a year older than Jere, two years older than me. Her hair was

dark brown, cut in a swishy bob, and she was petite. She was, by anybody's standards, hot. According to Taylor, she had a thing for Jeremiah. I told Taylor it didn't bother me one bit, and I meant it. Why should I care?

Of course girls would like Jeremiah. He was the kind of boy girls liked. But even a girl as pretty as Lacie didn't have anything on us. We were a couple years and years in the making. I knew him better than anyone, the same as he knew me, and I knew Jere would never look at another girl.

Jeremiah saw me then, and he waved at me to come over. I walked up to them and said, "Hey, Lacie."

"Hey," she said.

Pulling me toward him, Jeremiah said, "Lacie is gonna study abroad in Paris this fall." To Lacie, he said, "We want to go backpacking in Europe next summer."

Sipping her beer, she said, "That's cool. Which countries?"

"We're definitely going to France," Jeremiah said. "Belly speaks really fluent French."

"I actually don't," I told her, embarrassed. "I just took it in high school."

Lacie said, "Oh, I'm horrible too. I really just want to go and eat lots of cheese and chocolate."

She had a voice that was surprisingly husky for someone so small. I wondered if she smoked. She smiled at me, and I thought, Taylor was wrong about her, she was a nice girl.

When she left a few minutes later to get a drink, I said, “She’s nice.”

Jeremiah shrugged and said, “Yeah, she’s cool. Want me to get you a drink?”

“Sure,” I said.

He led me by the shoulders and planted me on the couch. “You sit right here. Don’t move a muscle. I’ll be right back.”

I watched him make his way through the crowd, feeling proud I could call him mine. My boyfriend, my Jeremiah. The first boy I had ever fallen asleep next to. The first boy I ever told about the time I accidentally walked in on my parents doing it when I was eight. The first boy to go out and buy me Midol because my cramps were so bad, the first boy to paint my toenails, to hold my hair back when I threw up that time I got really drunk in front of all his friends, the first boy to write me a love note on the whiteboard hanging outside my dorm room.

YOU ARE THE MILK TO MY SHAKE,
forever and ever. Love, J.

He was the first boy I ever kissed. He was my best friend. More and more, I understood. This was the way it was supposed to be. He was the one. My one.



chapter *four*

It was later that night.

We were dancing. I had my arms around Jeremiah's neck, and the music was pulsing around us. I felt flushed and abuzz, from the dancing and from the alcohol. The room was packed with people, but when Jere looked at me, there was no one else. Just me and him.

He reached down and tucked a strand of hair behind my ear. He said something I couldn't hear.

"What?" I yelled.

He yelled, "Don't ever cut your hair, okay?"

"I have to! I'd look like—like a witch."

Jeremiah tapped his ear and said, "I can't hear you!"

"Witch!" I shook my hair around my face for emphasis and mimed stirring a cauldron and cackling.

"I like you witchy," he said in my ear. "How about just trims?"

I shouted, “I promise not to cut my hair short if you promise to give up your beard dream!”

He’d been talking about growing a beard ever since Thanksgiving, when some of his high school friends got a contest going to see who could grow it the longest. I’d told him no way, it reminded me too much of my dad.

“I’ll consider it,” he said, kissing me.

He tasted like beer, and I probably did too.

Then Jeremiah’s frat brother Tom—also known as Redbird for reasons unknown to me—spotted us, and he came charging at Jeremiah like a bull. He was wearing his underwear and carrying a water bottle. And they weren’t boxers, they were tighty whities. “Break it up, break it up!” he shouted.

They started messing around, and when Jeremiah got Tom in a headlock, Tom’s water bottle of beer spilled all over me and Anika’s dress.

“Sorry, sorry,” he mumbled. When Tom was really drunk, he said everything twice.

“It’s okay,” I said, wringing out the skirt and trying not to look at the lower half of his body.

I left to go clean my dress in the bathroom, but there was a long line, so I went to the kitchen. People were doing body shots on the kitchen table; Jeremiah’s frat brother Luke was licking salt out of a red-haired girl’s belly button.

“Hey, Isabel,” he said, looking up.

“Um, hey, Luke,” I said. Then I spotted some girl throwing up in the sink, and I booked it out of there.

I headed to the upstairs bathroom. At the top of the staircase, I squeezed past a guy and a girl making out, and I accidentally stepped on the guy’s hand. “I’m so sorry,” I said, but he didn’t seem to notice either way, since he had his other hand up the girl’s shirt.

When I finally made it to the bathroom, I locked the door behind me and let out a little sigh of relief. This party was even wilder than usual. I guessed with the end of year upon us and finals over, everybody was letting loose. I was kind of glad Anika hadn’t been able to come. It wouldn’t be her scene—not that it was mine, either.

I dabbed liquid soap onto the wet marks and crossed my fingers it wouldn’t stain. Someone tried to open the door, and I called out, “Just a sec.”

As I stood there, dabbing at the dress, I heard girls on the other side talking. I wasn’t really paying attention until I heard Lacie’s voice. I heard her say, “He looks hot tonight, right?”

Another voice said, “He always looks hot.”

She was slurring as she said, “Hell yeah he does.”

The other girl said, “I’m so jealous you got to hook up with him.”

In a singsong voice, Lacie said, “Whatever happens in Cabo stays in Cabo.”

I felt dizzy all of a sudden. I leaned my back against

the bathroom door to steady myself. There was no way she was talking about Jeremiah. No way.

Someone banged on the door, and I jumped.

Without thinking, I opened it. Lacie's hand flew to her mouth when she saw me. The look on her face was like a punch in the stomach. I felt physical pain. I could hear the other girls' sharp intakes of breath, but it all felt far away. I felt like I was sleepwalking as I moved past her and the girls and down the hallway.

I couldn't believe it. It couldn't be true. Not my Jere.

I went to his room and locked the door behind me. I sat on his bed, knees curled into my chest, going over it in my head. *Whatever happens in Cabo stays in Cabo.* The look on Lacie's face, the way the other girls gasped. It played in my head like a movie, over and over. The two of them talking tonight. The way he'd shrugged when I said she was nice.

I had to know for sure. I had to hear it from Jeremiah.

I left his room and went looking for him. As I searched, I could feel the shock turning into anger. I pushed my way through the crowd. One drunk girl slurred, "Hey!" when I stepped on her foot, but I didn't stop to say "excuse me."

I finally found him standing around outside drinking beer with his frat buddies. From the open door, I said, "I need to talk to you."

"Just a sec, Bells," he said.

"No. Now."

The guys all started cracking up and going, “Oooh, somebody’s in trouble.” “Fisher’s so whipped.”

I waited.

Jeremiah must have seen something in my eyes, because he followed me inside, up the stairs, and into his bedroom. I shut the door behind me.

“What’s going on?” he asked me, looking all concerned.

I practically spat the words out. “Did you hook up with Lacie Barone during spring break?”

Jeremiah’s face turned white. “What?”

“Did you hook up with her?”

“Belly—”

“I knew it,” I whispered. “I knew it.”

Even though I didn’t know it, not really. I didn’t know anything.

“Hold on, just hold on.”

“Hold on?” I screamed. “Oh my God, Jere. Oh my God.”

I sank onto the floor. My legs couldn’t even hold me up.

Jeremiah knelt down beside me and tried to help me up, but I slapped his hands away. “Don’t touch me!”

He got down on the floor next to me, his head hanging between his knees. “Belly, it was when we were on that break. When we were broken up.” I stared at him.

Our so-called breakup had lasted all of a week. It wasn’t even a real breakup, not for me. I always assumed

we would get back together. I had cried the whole week, while he had been in Cabo kissing Lacie Barone.

“You knew we weren’t really broken up! You knew it wasn’t real!”

Miserably, he said, “How was I supposed to know that?”

“If I knew it, you should have known it!”

He swallowed, and his Adam’s apple bobbed up and down. “Lacie kept following me around all week. She wouldn’t leave me alone. I swear to you, I didn’t want to hook up with her. It just happened.” His voice trailed off.

I felt so dirty inside hearing him say that. Just disgusted. I didn’t want to think about the two of them, didn’t want to picture it. “Be quiet,” I said. “I don’t want to hear it.”

“It was a mistake.”

“A mistake? You call that a mistake? A mistake is when you left my shower shoes in the shower and they got all mildewy and I had to throw them out. That’s a mistake, you jerk.” I burst into tears.

He didn’t say anything. He just sat there and took it, his head hanging down.

“I don’t even know who you are anymore.” My stomach lurched. “I think I’m going to be sick.”

Jeremiah got me the wastebasket by his bed and I threw up, heaving and crying. He tried to rub my back, but I jerked away from him. “Don’t touch me,” I mumbled, wiping my mouth with the back of my arm.

It didn’t make sense. None of it. This wasn’t the

Jeremiah I knew. My Jeremiah would never hurt me like this. He would never so much as look at another girl. My Jeremiah was true and strong and steady. I didn't know who this person was.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I'm really sorry."

Jeremiah was crying now too. Good, I thought. Hurt like you've hurt me.

"I want to be totally honest with you, Belly. I don't want any more secrets." He really broke down then, crying hard.

I went totally still.

"We had sex."

Before I knew it, my hand was striking his face. I slapped him as hard as I could. I wasn't even thinking, I was just doing. My hand left a splotchy red imprint on his right cheek.

We stared at each other. I couldn't believe I had hit him, and neither could he. The shock was just beginning to register on his face, and I probably had the same look on mine. I had never hit anyone before.

Rubbing his cheek, he said, "I'm so sorry."

I cried harder. I had pictured them hooking up, making out. I hadn't even considered sex. I was so stupid.

He said, "It didn't mean anything. I swear to you, it didn't."

He tried to touch my arm, and I flinched. Wiping my cheeks, I said, "Maybe to you sex doesn't mean anything."

But it means something to me, and you knew that. You've ruined everything. I'll never trust you again."

He tried to pull me toward him, but I pushed him away. Desperately, he said, "I'm telling you, the thing with Lacie didn't mean anything."

"It means something to *me*. And it obviously meant something to her."

"I'm not in love with her!" he cried out. "I'm in love with you!"

Jeremiah crawled over to where I was. He put his arms around my knees. "Don't leave," he begged. "Please don't leave."

I tried to shake him off, but he was strong. He clung to me like I was a raft and he was at sea.

"I love you so much," he said, his whole body shaking. "It's always been you, Belly."

I wanted to keep screaming and crying and somehow find a way out of this. But I didn't see a way. Looking down at him, I felt like I was made of stone. He had never disappointed me before. For him to do it now made it that much harder, because I hadn't seen it coming. It was hard to believe that just a few short hours ago he'd carried me across campus on his back and I'd loved him more than ever.

"We can't get it back," I said, and I said it to hurt him. "What we were, it's gone. We lost it tonight."

Desperately, he said, "Yes, we can. I know we can."