



IF
LOVE
BOOK
ONE

*if we
ever
meet
again*

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

ANA HUANG

IF WE EVER MEET
AGAIN

IF LOVE DUET BOOK #1

ANA HUANG

Ana Huang

Copyright © 2020 by Ana Huang

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the author, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

Resemblance to actual persons, things, living or dead, locales or events is entirely coincidental.

IF WE EVER MEET AGAIN

Cover designer: Vanessa Mendozzi

Editor: April Jones, Salt & Sage

Proofreader: Krista Burdine

CONTENTS

[Synopsis](#)

[Playlist](#)

[Author's note](#)

[Prologue](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 17](#)

[Chapter 18](#)

[Chapter 19](#)

[Chapter 20](#)

[Chapter 21](#)

[Chapter 22](#)

[SPRING SEMESTER](#)

[Chapter 23](#)

[Chapter 24](#)

[Chapter 25](#)

[Chapter 26](#)

[Chapter 27](#)

[Chapter 28](#)

[Chapter 29](#)

[Chapter 30](#)

[Chapter 31](#)

[Chapter 32](#)

[Chapter 33](#)

[Chapter 34](#)

[Chapter 35](#)

[Chapter 36](#)

[Chapter 37](#)

[Chapter 38](#)

[Pre-order book two](#)

[Excerpt: If the Sun Never Sets](#)

[Keep in touch with Ana Huang](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[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, congratulating-fuckings. 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.

He cried because it kept his mind off the desperate loneliness that weighed on his soul the moment she left.

Most of all, he cried for what they had, what they lost, and what they could never be.

CHAPTER ONE

Eight months ago

“One classic milk tea and one honey oolong milk tea with tapioca. Regular sugar, regular ice.”

Farrah Lin slid a twenty yuan note across the counter toward the cashier, who smiled in recognition. Four days in Shanghai and Farrah was already a regular at the bubble tea joint by campus. She chose not to dwell on what that meant for her wallet and her waistline.

While the staff prepared her order, Farrah examined the menu. She knew *nai cha* (milk tea) and *xi gua* (watermelon). She recognized a few other Chinese characters, but not enough to form a coherent phrase.

“Here you go.” The cashier handed Farrah her drinks. “See you tomorrow!”

Farrah blushed. “Thanks.”

Note to self: ask Olivia to make tomorrow’s run.

Farrah stepped out of the tiny shop and walked back to campus. The sun began its descent and bathed the city in a warm golden glow. Bicyclists and motorcyclists zipped by, battling with cars for space on the narrow side street. The delicious smells wafting from the restaurants Farrah passed mixed with the far-less-pleasant scents of garbage and construction dust. Street vendors called out to passersby, hawking everything from hats and scarves to books and DVDs.

Farrah made the mistake of making eye contact with one such vendor.

“*Mei nu!*” *Beautiful girl.* It’d be flattering if Farrah didn’t know the hard sell that accompanied such a greeting. “Come, come.” The elderly vendor beckoned her over. “Where are you from?” she asked in Mandarin.

Farrah hesitated before answering. “America.” *Mei guo.* She dragged out the last syllable, unsure whether the admission would hurt or help.

“Ah, America. ABC,” the vendor said knowingly. ABC: American-Born Chinese. Farrah had heard that a lot lately. “I have some great books in

English.” The vendor brandished a copy of *Eat, Pray, Love*. “Only twenty kuai!”

“Thanks, but I’m not interested.”

“How about this one?” The woman picked out a Dan Brown novel. “I’ll give you a deal. Three books for fifty kuai!”

Farrah didn’t need new books, and fifty kuai (around \$7 USD) seemed pricey for cheap reprints of old novels. But the vendor seemed like a nice old lady, and Farrah didn’t have the energy to bargain with her.

She skimmed the English options and went straight for the romance: Jane Austen, Nicholas Sparks, JoJo Moyes.

Ok, Sparks and Moyes write love stories, not romance, but still.

Given the drought in Farrah’s dating life, she’d settle for any kind of romantic relationship, even one that ended tragically. Well, maybe not with death, but with a breakup or something. Anything that proved the crazy head-over-heels love you found in books and movies existed in real life.

After a disappointing freshman year filled with mediocre dates and fumbling stops at third base, Farrah was ready to give up on reality and live in fantasyland full time.

“I’ll take these.” She set her drinks on the ground so she could pick up *Pride & Prejudice* (her personal favorite), *The Notebook*, and *Me Before You*. She’d read all of them already, but what the heck, a reread never hurt anybody.

Farrah paid the vendor, who beamed and gushed her thanks before turning her attention to the next passerby.

“*Mei nu!*” The vendor flagged down a young woman in a cobalt dress. “Come, come.”

Farrah looped her shopping bag around her wrist and picked up her drinks while the young woman fended off the vendor’s aggressive sales pitch. She speed-walked back to campus, taking care not to make eye contact with any more vendors lest she got suckered into buying something else she didn’t need.

Farrah stopped at the crosswalk. Instead of crossing when the pedestrian light flashed green, she waited until a group of teenagers stepped off the curb before following them into the jungle that was Shanghai traffic.

Rule #1 of surviving in China: cross when locals cross. There's safety in numbers.

By the time Farrah arrived at Shanghai Foreign Studies University, her study abroad program's host campus, she'd already finished her drink. She tossed the empty container into a nearby trash can and pushed open the door to FEA's lobby.

FEA, aka Foreign Education Academy, occupied one of the oldest buildings at SFSU. Not only did the four-story building lack an elevator, but the interior design left much to be desired. The lobby had potential—marble floors, tons of natural light streaming in through large windows facing the courtyard—but the furniture was straight out of the 80s (and not in the cool retro kind of way).

A cracked brown leather couch lined the wall beneath the windows alongside mismatched chairs and tables. A spindly magazine stand sagged beneath the weight of dozens of back issues of *Time Out Shanghai*. Faded Chinese landscape paintings hung on the wall, adding to the musty feel.

As usual, Farrah couldn't help mentally redecorating the space. As she took the stairs to the third floor, she swapped out the current furniture for a cushioned wicker set with glass-topped tables, which would visually expand the lobby. Out went the old watercolors and in came the panels of Asian-inspired art—perhaps some up-close representations of the lotus flower or plum blossoms with modern Chinese calligraphy. There could be a wall of bookshelves for—

“Ow!” Farrah had been so absorbed in her design daydream she slammed into the wall. Her hand shot to her forehead as pain ricocheted through her brain. Fortunately, she couldn't feel a bump.

Olivia's bubble tea also remained intact, thank god. She was scary when she didn't get her sugar fix.

The wall moved. “Are you ok?” it asked.

A walking, talking wall. She must've hit her head harder than she thought.

Farrah peeked out from beneath her hand and found herself staring into a pair of crystal blue eyes. She recognized those eyes. They'd stared back at her from the cover of *Sports Illustrated* last year, along with the accompanying high cheekbones and cocky grin.

Now, they examined her with a mix of amusement and concern.

"You're not a wall," she blurted.

"No, I'm not." The not-a-wall cocked an eyebrow. A hint of a smile played over his lips. "I've been called a lot of things in my life, but that's a new one."

Farrah fought the flush of embarrassment spreading across her face. Of all the people she could've run into, she had to run into Blake Ryan.

Even though she wasn't a sports fan, she knew who he was. Everyone did. A hotshot football player from Texas who caused a national uproar when he quit the team at the beginning of the year. Besides the *Sports Illustrated* cover, Farrah remembered Blake from an ESPN documentary about the most talented college athletes in the country. Farrah's roommate last year forced her to watch it because she was obsessed with the point guard on CCU's basketball team, and she needed someone she could gush to.

It'd been the most boring seventy-five minutes of Farrah's life, but at least there'd been plenty of eye candy, none of whom were dishier than the Texan standing in front of her.

Six feet two inches of tanned skin and chiseled muscle, topped with golden hair, glacial blue eyes, and cheekbones that could cut ice. He wasn't Farrah's type, but she had to admit the boy was fire. Blake looked the way she'd pictured Apollo looking when she learned about Greek mythology in seventh grade.

"Well, you're really hard." The words slipped out before Farrah could catch them.

I did not just say that out loud.

The flush traveled from her face to the rest of her body. No matter how hard she prayed, the floor didn't open up and swallow her whole, that bastard.

Blake's other eyebrow shot up.

"I mean, your *chest* is really hard. Nothing else. Although I'm sure it could be hard if it wanted to."

Kill me.

The hint of amusement blossomed into a full-fledged grin, revealing twin dimples that should be classified as lethal weapons.

"It sure can," Blake drawled. "Especially when I'm around someone as beautiful as you."

Farrah's mortification screeched to a halt. "Oh, *please*. Do they actually work for you?"

"Excuse me?"

"Your cheesy pickup lines. Do they actually work for you?"

"I've never had any complaints. Besides, look at me." Blake gestured at himself. "I don't need pickup lines."

"Wow." Farrah shook her head. *Typical jock*. "It must be difficult walking around with such a big head."

"Babe, that's not the only part of me that's big."

Farrah couldn't help it; her eyes dropped to the region below Blake's belt. An image of what hid behind the denim flashed through her mind's eye. Her mouth went dry.

"I'm talking about my chest, of course." Blake shook with laughter.

Farrah's gaze snapped up to his face. "I knew that." The mortification crept back up her neck.

"Sure. Since you've already undressed me with your eyes, we should—"

"I did *not* undress you—"

"Properly introduce ourselves." He held out his hand. "I'm Blake."

She knew who he was, and they both knew it. Farrah played along because 1) her mother raised her to be a polite human being; and 2) while she knew his name, there was every chance he didn't know hers. They'd met

briefly at orientation dinner the first night but there were seventy students in FEA. Farrah herself couldn't remember the names of half the people she met. "I'm Farrah."

She slid the handle of her plastic bag onto her other wrist so she could grasp his hand. His palms were warm and rough against hers. When they made contact, a tiny, unexpected shock sizzled through her veins.

"Farrah from California."

She couldn't have been more surprised if he started reciting *The Iliad* in ancient Greek. "You remember."

"How could I forget?" Blake's gaze swept over her face and lingered on her mouth.

Farrah's heart rate kicked up a notch. He was the opposite of her ideal romantic hero—tall, dark, and handsome, with a side of sensitive, cultured, and well-read—but there was no denying Blake's sex appeal. It dripped from him like honey from a hive.

"So we didn't need to introduce ourselves."

"No." He stepped closer without releasing her hand. "But I wanted an excuse to touch you."

No, Blake wasn't her type, but any girl in the world would melt under the heat of his gaze. Farrah hated to admit it, but she was no exception.

She'd be damned if she showed it, though.

While she struggled to come up with a witty rejoinder, Blake lowered his head to whisper in her ear. "Still think my pickup lines are cheesy?"

Farrah yanked her hand out of his and ignored his laughter. The deep, velvety sound rolled through the empty stairwell, filling it with its richness.

"As a matter of fact, I do," she said with as much dignity as she could muster. "You're not as hot as you think you are." *Lies*. "There are plenty of guys as good-looking as you."

"Aha! So you think I'm good-looking."

Dammit. "Only from a physical point of view."

"Er, that's what good-looking means."