

Penguin



Readers

The background of the book cover features a large, central heart shape. This heart is filled with a dense pattern of smaller hearts in various sizes and colors, including orange, yellow, and pink. The overall effect is warm and affectionate.

IT'S NOT SUMMER WITHOUT YOU

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CHAPTER ONE

Waiting

Every year, when school finished in June, we put all our things in the car and drove straight to the summer house in Cousins. That house was my favorite place in the world, and it was the only place that I ever wanted to be. My mom, my brother Steven, and I never missed a summer there with Conrad and his brother, Jeremiah, and their mom, Susannah. They were our summer family. Susannah was my mom's best friend, and I loved her like a second mom. It was her house, and she started inviting my mom there before I was even born.

I always followed the boys around, trying to **hang out**. Jeremiah was my friend, but Conrad and Steven just thought that I was a little **kid**. I was in love with Conrad, but he never even noticed me until last summer, when he kissed me.

When I got home at the end of last summer, I waited for Conrad to call. August became September, school started, and I still waited. We only kissed so it wasn't like Conrad was my boyfriend. And now he was at college, where there were a million other girls, all prettier and cleverer than me.

I thought about him every minute of every day. What did our kiss mean? We couldn't go back to how things were between us. I knew that I couldn't. Last summer, everything changed between me and Conrad, and between

me and Jeremiah. So when Conrad didn't call, I only had to think about the way that he looked at me after he kissed me. I knew that there was hope; I just had to wait.

The call came the second week of September. Steven and I were fighting about what to watch on TV. The phone rang, and neither Steven nor I moved to answer it. My mother picked it up in her office. She brought the phone to the living room, and she said, "Belly, it's for you. It's Conrad." Then she smiled.

My heart started **beating** loudly in my chest, and I could hear the ocean in my ears. Conrad was calling me, and it felt so good. I took the phone and walked to the stairs.

I sat down, and I said, "Hi."

I tried to keep the smile off my face because I didn't want him to hear it on the phone.

"Hi," he said. "How are you?"

"I'm OK."

"You won't **believe** this," he said. "My **roommate snores** even louder than you do."

Conrad called again the next night, and the night after. We talked for hours at a time. Steven did not understand. "Why is Conrad calling you?" he asked.

"He likes me, and I like him," I replied.

Steven looked sick. "He's lost his mind," he said, shaking his head.

"Is it *so* impossible that Conrad likes me?" I asked him.

"Yes," he said. "It is *so* impossible."

And it really was. It was like a dream. After all those

years of loving him and wanting him, Conrad was calling me. He liked talking to me. He thought that I was funny, and I understood him. He wasn't my boyfriend yet, but we had something that was really special.

A few weeks after we started speaking on the phone, I told Conrad how I wasn't doing well in **math**. Then I felt bad for talking about it. I was telling him about my small problems, when I knew that Susannah had **cancer**.

"Sorry," I said. "I shouldn't talk about math when your mom's sick."

"Don't be sorry. You can say anything to me," he said. "And, Belly, my mom is getting better." He sounded so hopeful, and I felt even more love for him in that moment.

I said, "Yeah, I heard that from my mom yesterday. That's really good news."



"So, has your teacher taught you about infinity yet?" he asked.

From that day, Conrad started teaching me math. In the beginning, I didn't really listen to what he was saying. I just liked the sound of his voice. But then he asked me questions, and I didn't want to get the answers wrong. I never

loved him more than on those school nights, when he explained the same math problems again and again to me, until I understood, too.

A few times, Conrad drove the three-and-a-half hours from college to my house. Once, he stayed the night because it was really late, and my mother didn't want him to drive back. Conrad slept in the bedroom next to mine, and I lay in my bed awake for hours. I was thinking about how he was asleep just a few feet away, in *my* house.

Conrad didn't try to kiss me, but I knew that he wanted to. It was impossible because my brother was always there, talking to him about football. One night after dinner, I invited Conrad to go out and get ice cream. Steven said, "That sounds good to me."

I looked at him angrily, but he just smiled at me. And then Conrad took my hand, in front of Steven, and said, "Let's all go."

So, we all went, and my mother came, too. I couldn't believe that I was on a **date** with my mother and my brother. But it made that one wonderful night in December even sweeter. Conrad and I went back to Cousins, and it was just the two of us. **Amazing** nights like that don't happen very often, and I'm **glad** we had it, because it was all **over** before May.