

CHAPTER 1

I will find him.

"Jean, hey! Are you even listening to me?" she said as she noticed I wasn't listening to a word she was saying.

"Hmmm, yes."

I tried to avoid the look she was giving me, the one which said: don't lie to me.

"Okay, then what did I say?"

I smiled and said: "Fine, you win, I was not listening. What did you say?"

"Jean, please. It has been two years already. It is time to let him go. Trust me sweetie, you are just hurting yourself more and more and I do not want to see that," she said with the softest yet fakest smile I had ever seen. My smile dropped from my face and I felt how my jaw clenched just the smallest bit.

"Lizzy, we were not talking about him," I almost sneered at her.

We did not argue a lot, but when we did, it was almost always about him.

"But you were thinking of him, weren't you? And you weren't even talking or listening for that matter."

She was right, of course she was. However, he is still my brother, alive, missing, or even dead... blood doesn't change. She continued talking: "Look. If he was alive, Zahir would have been found already."

I felt how my blood started to boil.

"So I am just supposed to act like he never existed. How much did my parents pay you?"

She let out a defeated sigh. "I just don't want you to be in pain any longer. I want my girlfriend back. You know, the one I fell for. I haven't seen her in a while, have you?" Lizzy went on without much of a break between sentences.

"She went looking for her brother and isn't coming back before she finds him. I love you, Lizzy, I really do, but he is still my brother and I miss him." The anger had turned into sadness and the sadness had formed little tears which were now rolling down my face. Lizzy was quick to notice. She took my face in her hands and wiped it dry.

"I know, I really do, but staying in the past is not good for anyone, especially small girls from India."

"I am from Suriname," I said through the tears, which made her laugh. Not at my tears, but my response.

"Originally you are from India, right?" Now we were both laughing. As she was still holding my face I placed my hands over hers and gave her a quick kiss.

"You still haven't told me what you just said," I said as I freed myself from a train of small kisses.

"Right, I asked if you wanted to go on a date with me. You know, just the two of us... without your mom?" she asked.

"Is that even a question? Of course I would love to go with you," I said, looking everywhere but her. I loved her, I really did.

"Well, now that our date is set, what are we going to do?" I asked her, my girlfriend from back then.

"You will see," she said, giving me her smirk, the one she always gave me which earned her the pillow I threw to her face. Of course she threw it back and soon we were throwing pillows and everything soft to each other. It didn't take long before we accidentally knocked one of the opened paint tubes over and all of the pink paint was spread over my freshly cleaned bed sheets. We both burst out in laughter. However, my mom just happened to walk in to see what all that noise was about. When she saw the state of my room she let out a sigh and followed up by saying: "Jean, what happened in here? It looks like a bomb went off," she smiled softly. She knew what happened of course, moms always knew.

"Sorry, Mrs. Meshram. Don't worry, we'll clean every single spot 'till you can see your own reflection."

"Eh, that's going to take forever," I said dramatically, flopping myself on my bed, now lying on Lizzy's lap.

"Well, it better be clean before your dad comes home."

"Okay mom." I just noticed she was holding two plates of something in her hand. "Mom, what are those?" I asked, pointing to the plates. I already knew what they were, but that did not matter.

"Can a mother not bring her daughter and her future daughter-in-law some food?" she asked. I sat up straight now.

"Food is always welcome. Thank you, Mrs. Meshram," Lizzy said.

"Oh, please just call me Priya," my mom said as she put the plates down on my desk. "Okay, Mrs. Priya." My mom shot out in laughter and I couldn't help but smile at the fact that Lizzy was even liked by my mother. I stood up and hugged my mom as a thank you for the food, then I took the plates and handed one to Lizzy. My mom had cut up some fruits and turned it into two small bears with heart ears.

"Shall we clean after this?" Lizzy asked me.

"Probably for the best. I still can't believe you ended up on my mom's good side. Sure, as my best friend you've been on her good side since ages ago, but as my girlfriend..."

"What can I say, I'm just good with parents." We finished our food and I got the stuff to clean while I brought the plates back downstairs. I thanked my mom again before I went upstairs. She told me she had something to tell me, but didn't want to with Lizzy still in the house, since it was important and private. This sort of worried me, but I knew my mom so I wasn't too nervous. When I went back into my room, Lizzy was already picking up the pillows and my bed was as good as made.

"I hope the paint didn't dry yet or else it will be a pain to get it out of your sheets."

"Don't worry about it, it's just a bed sheet after all and it is still useable. No worries on that part." We took of the old bed sheet and replaced it with a new one. At the time we both did not know how to get the paint out, so I just threw it into the washer and hoped for the best.

"What now?" I asked her as I sat back down on my now fresh and clean bed. She walked over to me and flopped down next to me.

"All that paint got me in the mood to watch you paint," she said before she stood back up and took my arm, dragging me to where my easel was standing.

"But I don't even know what to paint." I love painting, I always have. Normally I knew what to paint. My mind was both a curse and a blessing, but that day it was more of a curse. I hadn't slept a lot and even normal things were harder than they were supposed to be.

"I am sure you will figure something out, as you always do." Lizzy took place on top of my desk and I could feel her eyes burning in the crook of my neck. Maybe I did have a small idea, one that had been stuck in my mind for a while. One that had been following me, not just in my dreams, but also here, in