

# SEVEN WEEKS TO FOREVER

*by* JENNIFER FARWELL



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For my mom and dad, who have supported my writing ambitions since I first picked up a crayon (even when it meant scribbling all over perfectly good white walls). Thank you for always being my biggest fans.

And for everyone who read and enjoyed *Rock Star's Girl* – thank you for all of your support and encouragement!



# CHAPTER ONE

**I KNOW HOW I DIE.** I know when, too.

It's going to happen less than two months from now, a few weeks after my eighteenth birthday and right before my family thinks I'm supposed to start college. My aunt will be devastated. Not because of the death thing, but because she hates wearing black. Plus, me dying means she won't get to host The Event of the Year to impress all of her friends before sending me off to Harvard. She's been counting on outdoing Mrs. Jensen, my ex-best-friend Selena's mother, since my sophomore year. That's when the Jensens had their big moving-to-L.A. party that robbed my aunt of her Best-Hostess-on-the-Cul-de-Sac title, or so she thinks. I'm pretty sure no one else cares. It was the same night that Selena had it out with me.

My uncle might be sad for a while, but he'll get over it. He's a surgeon. I've never seen him cry.

I'm not sick or anything, and I'm not planning my end. I just know what's going to happen. Just like I knew my parents wouldn't be coming home that afternoon when I was six and that the days of Disneyland and ice cream floats would end the second my aunt got ahold of me. And just like I know right now: If the concert I'm at is the last one I'll go to, I'm going to be mega-pissed. I can't see anything. Typical.

I'm certain there's some universal law that if you're under five-foot-four and standing close to the stage at an outdoor concert, some insanely tall person will come stand right in front of you. It rarely fails. Tonight's answer to the law is blond and around six feet tall,

give or take an inch. He looks to be about my age, which means he should have the decency to at least pretend to be a gentleman and not stand in front of a girl. L.A. boys are the worst, I swear, even though I once thought that no boys could be worse than the brats I went to school with in Boston. I changed my mind last week when some clown at the LAX baggage claim stepped on my foot before pushing me out of the way. And I mean that literally, since he was actually dressed as a clown. Welcome to L.A. and the start of my summer vacation.

The guy in front of me now is cute and all—hot, actually, in that way where I can just tell that most girls would let him get away with almost anything—but I'm not most girls and he's still in my way. I'd much rather be watching the stage than studying his dumb ironic T-shirt and the back of his sandy-blond head, both of which are annoying me to no end. Buddy, move over.

He's glued to his phone, though, completely oblivious and texting away. I think for a second, blowing a strand of my chestnut-brown hair out of my face. Then I try stepping to the side. My foot lands right on the foot of the girl standing next to me.

"Sorry," I mumble, retreating. The girl's lips smile, but her eyes don't. She has one on me, though, because I'm not smiling. I'm back to staring at this guy's head. He's still texting.

I lift my heels off of the ground so I can stand on tiptoe. Just when I can see the band's singer, an arm shoots up, phone in hand, obstructing my view once more. Great. Him again. It figures he's part of the camera phone fanarazzi. He's probably live-tweeting the entire show, too.

I have two options here that I can see, other than giving up and moving farther away from the stage to watch the show. I can stay here and fight the urge to kick this guy, or I can try to squeeze in front of him. Maybe I can accidentally connect my foot with his leg on my way by. Option two it is: I square my shoulders and turn my body sideways, then try to wedge myself between him and the girl standing next to him.

He barely glances at me when I bump into him, but the girl fixes me with what I'm sure is her version of a death stare. I force the corners of my lips to turn up into a smile, or at least what I hope passes for one.

"Sorry," I say. I'm not, but she doesn't need to know that. "I'm not trying to get in front of you, I just couldn't see over the guy beside you."

A knowing look appears on her face. She gets it—she's even shorter than I am. "No problem," she replies, taking a step to the side to give me more room.

"Thanks. I'm Cassidy, by the way." I don't really want to make friends with her, but I've learned that the more polite I am to the people I shove, the less likely I am to get shoved back or punched. She nods and turns her head back to the stage.

I'm elbow-to-elbow with the guy now, and I'm not budging. He takes a step backward after a few minutes pass. It's about time. I want to tell him that but I keep my mouth shut, quickly scooting over to claim the empty spot so I can give the girl beside me some breathing room. Victory.

Now that I can see the stage, the show is freaking amazing. Lazy Monday is my favorite band. I've never seen them play before tonight but I have every album they've released and a few bootlegs, and I know the words to all of their songs. I was fifteen the first time I heard one of their songs on the radio in my aunt's car. It was the only bright spot in my day after being held hostage for back-to-school shopping at a bunch of snooty little boutiques. Turning up the volume on the Lazy Monday song won me the iciest of icy looks and a station-change to something classical. The obvious thing to do was to download the song when I got home and blast it from my bedroom for the next four months. I doubt my aunt misses my music collection very much now that it's here with me in L.A., thousands of miles away from her house in Boston. I doubt she misses me much, either.

The universal law of concerts kicks in again during the show's encore, but that's usually how it goes. People farther back in the crowd surge forward for their chance to see some band sweat, and some of them try to push past me. There's no point in fighting this many people so I take a step backward, stumbling when my foot slides on something on the ground. I look down and see somebody's University of Southern California student card beside my shoe.

I bend over to pick it up, bumping arms with the wall of people around me on the way down and again when I stand back up. The

photo on the card tells me it belongs to the guy who was blocking my view at the start of the show. It probably fell out of his pocket one of the seventy-spillion or so times he pulled out his phone. It serves him right to lose it, but I turn around anyway to see if he's still close by. None of the faces behind me look familiar. I rise up on the balls of my feet to see if he's been nudged a few rows back but still don't see him. Oh well, I tried.

I think about dropping the card back on the ground. Something makes me stop and glance at the name printed beside the photo, though. Wait. I bring the card closer to my face, reading it again just to be sure.

*Riley Davis.* It can't be. But it figures that it is.

I study the photo, closer this time, looking for any hint that it's not someone else who just happens to live in the same city and have the same name. It's him, or at least I think it is. I turn around to search the crowd again, but there's still no sign of Riley Davis. It's not lost on me that just a few minutes ago, I would have been more than happy to never see the back of his head again. Now my stomach is sinking because I don't spot him anywhere.

He can't disappear. I've waited almost eighteen years to find him, even though I didn't know his name until last week. I was starting to think he didn't exist since I couldn't find him on the Internet. I mean, who can't you find on the Internet? People who don't exist, that's who.

He exists, though, and he's gone. I'd curse, but I'm trying to be better about that since I'm dying soon. Not that swearing would keep me from what comes next, the place most people here call the afterlife. They're wrong about that, by the way. It's actually called The Life-After, and the only thing keeping me from getting there is one Mr. Riley Davis. I really don't have time for him to just up and vanish. He doesn't have time for it either, but he doesn't know that. If I don't find him and help him, he'll die. I mean, he'll die at some point anyway since everybody does. It won't be the right time for him, though, and then he'll end up just like me and be forced to come back here for a second time. I won't end up anywhere—not here or The Life-After. I'll just be gone forever.

Tucking the card in my purse, I push past the sea of people around me who are still trying to get closer to the stage. Riley couldn't have gotten very far, and I have to find him.



\* \* \*

I pull into the driveway in front of my house just before eleven o'clock. Riley's student card is still in my purse and he's still missing, damn him. So much for not cursing. There has to be a way to find him again, even in this city of millions.

"Sleep on it," I tell myself, pulling the keys from the ignition and getting out of the car.

My footsteps echo in the driveway as I walk up to the front stoop of the house that officially becomes mine on my eighteenth birthday. Not that it will be mine for all that long. I lived in this house once before, until my parents died and I was whisked away to Boston.

Once I'm inside, I kick my shoes into a corner and then head for the kitchen, taking a deep breath as I walk down the hall. I hold it for a moment, trying to clear my mind so I can relax. My breath turns into a yelp on its way out of my lungs.

I'm not alone in my house.