

Rules  
*are made to be*  
~~FOLLOWED~~  
*Broken*

MYLISSA DEMEYERE

Rules are Made to be Broken  
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Everything means nothing if I can't have you.

SHAWN MENDES



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## PROLOGUE



### TEN YEARS AGO

#### CHARLOTTE

I WALKED THROUGH THE DOUBLE DOORS AND INTO THE lobby, clutching the strap of my backpack on my shoulder as if my life depended on it. Following the path I remembered from last time I was here, I knocked on the door of the student counselor's office and waited. Instead of the usual *Come in* I was expecting, the door swung open and Ms. Michaels's lips curved into a warm smile.

"Welcome, Charlotte. Why don't you come in and take a seat?"

I shrugged out of my backpack as I slid into the seat she indicated opposite her desk, still keeping a tight hold of the strap in my hand.

"I bet you're nervous. But don't worry. We've got your

books all ready for you, and I spoke to Kelsey Henderson. She's in your first class—which is English, by the way.” She smiled over her wire-rimmed glasses as she glanced up from the papers she held in her hands. “She'll save you a seat and show you the ropes. She had a debate meeting to attend, so she couldn't be here to welcome you. But she'll be in class in fifteen minutes, waiting for you. Shall we go find your locker and get you all set up?”

I smiled as I chirped out an *okay*.

Ms. Michaels led the way and I followed, almost jogging to keep up with her fast pace, my arms laden with all the books she'd kept out for me today. I wasn't sure how I would find my way in this maze when I was left alone. She kept pointing out each important landmark as we passed it, but it was lost on me as I struggled to keep up with her and balance the pile of heavy books.

“Ah, Mr. Stanford.” She called out to the gray-haired man, with his nose stuck in a book, walking in front of us. “If you have a minute. I need to talk to you about one of your students.” She turned to me. “Your locker is over there.” She pointed to the right. “I'll be back in a minute. Why don't you go put those books away?”

She didn't wait for my reply as she left me standing there with my arms drooping under the weight of the mountain of text books.

I shifted the stack onto one arm, pinning the load against the wall as I dug out the key from my pocket. Grabbing the books with both arms again, I turned into the direction of my locker but felt the pile slide as I crashed into a hard wall of muscle. The books went flying, and I stumbled



after them. A strong, warm hand on my wrist pulled me upright, stopping my inevitable fall and complete embarrassment.

“Hey, you okay?”

My eyes, which were squeezed shut in an attempt to hide my awkwardness, opened up and landed on one of the most gorgeous faces I’d ever seen in my entire life. Icy blue eyes studied me with concern as that warm hand continued to hold me tight. I was glad for the help, because my knees turned weak and my fingers twitched, wanting to reach out and brush the blond curls out of the way of those mesmerizing eyes.

“I’m...fine.” I finally choked out. “Thanks for the save.” I gently pulled my hand out of his grasp, needing to free myself from his intoxicating hold.

Bending down, I started stacking my books. His hands were there in seconds, helping me with the task.

“Thanks,” I said. Before I could lift the pile, he hefted it effortlessly, and his lips pulled up in a warm smile, one that made a swarm of butterflies go crazy in my belly.

“Can I help you put these away?” He indicated the stack in his arms, lifting his brows and drawing my gaze to those icy blue eyes again, distracting me.

“Euh...” I shifted from foot to foot. “I’m not sure which locker is mine,” I admitted, dropping my gaze to the floor.

“Let’s see. Which number?”

“One twenty-three.” I mumbled the number off the paper Ms. Michaels handed me earlier, my thoughts distracted by this guy. I was still unsure why he was being so kind to me after I went barreling into him and made a complete idiot of

myself. Couldn't he just hand my books over and leave me be before I did something else even more ridiculous?

"Cool. I'm right next to you." He walked over to my locker and pointed out his, smack next to mine. "You're new here, right?"

I nodded, feeling my cheeks heat.

"Any questions you have, I'm your guy. And you know where to find me now." He winked, and it did funny things to my insides.

"There you are." Ms. Michaels huffed as she spotted us. "We need to get going. You're going to be late. You didn't put your books away yet?" She eyed the pile in my hands and raised her brows above her glasses. "Come on now."

The guy handed my books over. Our hands brushed in the process, and the contact sent delicious shivers down my spine.

"Thanks," I said as I hurriedly stowed my books into my locker and followed Ms. Michaels.

"You're welcome." He smiled, and my heart stuttered in my chest. This guy was beyond hot.

"I'm Will, by the way." He held out his hand to shake mine.

I reached out to return the gesture, replying, "I'm Char..."

"Hurry up. We'll be late." Ms. Michaels interrupted our exchange, causing me to pull my hand back before I even had the chance to make contact. Probably best. My body was already buzzing from that single brush earlier. I wasn't sure how I'd react if our hands connected on purpose. I offered a quick wave instead and joined Ms. Michaels as she waited at the end of the hall, tapping her foot impatiently.

Just before we were rounded the corner, Will called out, “See you around, Charles.”

I shook my head, not bothering to correct him, and followed behind Ms. Michaels, eager to get to class on time.

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“LET ME SEE YOUR SCHEDULE AGAIN?” KELSEY PLUCKED the paper off the lunch table and scanned the contents. “We have like...one class together this afternoon.” She took another bite of her apple and munched on it as she passed the schedule to the girl next to her. “This is perfect. We can sit next to each other again, and I’ll show you all you need to know to survive chemistry with Mr. Smith. No prob.” She smiled at me for like the hundredth time today, and I felt the last of my worries from this morning disappear. She’d sat with me through three of my four classes, walked with me to the one class we didn’t share, and found me someone to sit by in that class. And she’d been waiting for me at lunch so I wouldn’t have to figure out the cafeteria dynamics alone on my first day. She was proving to be a great friend in a place where I knew absolutely nobody. Except Will. I hadn’t been able to stop thinking about him and his blue eyes. Or the way my belly flopped when his hand grazed mine. But I hadn’t asked Kelsey about him yet. I was too embarrassed to tell her how I’d fallen all over him, literally.

“I’ve got a feeling you and I are going to be the best of friends, Charlotte.” Kelsey swung her arm around my shoulder. Her words warmed me. After my parents died and I

transferred to Palm Spring High, I was eager to make new friends. Anyone to fill up the empty hole in my life.

“Of course, if you and I are friends, you have to promise me something.” Kelsey’s face grew serious. I had no idea what she was about to ask me, but I was willing to promise her just about anything. My friends at my old school didn’t know how to be around me when my parents died. I couldn’t blame them. I didn’t know how to deal with it, either. But the loss of that friendship left me starved for it.

“I have one rule, if you and I are to stay friends.” She paused, making me question my earlier resolve.

“You have to promise not to date my brother. I lost my last best friend because she dated my brother, and they didn’t last. So, yeah, I don’t want my close friends dating him. You think you can handle not dating my bro?”

I stared at her to make sure she was serious. I didn’t know who her brother was, but I didn’t care. Right now, all I was interested in was Kelsey’s friendship.

“Of course. Sisters before misters, right?” I smiled, relieved she didn’t have some crazy initiation ritual I needed to pass.

“Exactly!” Kelsey pulled me in for another sideways hug. “See, I knew you and I were meant to be best of friends. Let’s get going. Mr. Smith hates it when we’re late.” She got up, her tray in her hand as the first bell rang.

I followed after her, not sure I would find the way through the maze of hallways and students moving about the place.

The rest of the afternoon passed in a daze. As the final

bell rang, I was spent. I followed Kelsey to her locker and was surprised to find it located only one row over from mine.

I moved over to my locker and opened it, secretly hoping to catch another glimpse of Will. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the object of my new obsession walking into the hallway.

"Hey, Charles. I see you're settling in all right." He sidled up to my locker, placing his hand above the open door and resting his weight on his hand, looking completely at ease.

"The name's *Charlotte*." I corrected him, feeling my cheeks pinken. I hadn't had the chance to correct him earlier, but I wasn't about to let it slide this time.

"I think Charles suits you better." He smiled that same way he had this morning, and I was glad I had my locker door to hold onto as I gazed up at him.

Kelsey joined me on my other side, and I smiled at my new best friend.

"I see you've met my brother already." She crossed her arms over her chest.

My lips pulled down in a frown as her words registered.

"Your brother?" I stammered.

"Meet Will Henderson, my brother," Kelsey said, her right eyebrow raising on the word *brother*. "Will, meet Charlotte Dubois. My new friend." The way she said *friend* sounded more like a warning than polite conversation.

And as my brain made the connection, I understood that the one guy that made my heart feel like it might beat out of my chest was the one guy I promised to stay away from. How on earth did I manage to get into this situation?



## CHAPTER 1



### **PRESENT DAY**

#### **CHARLOTTE**

“YOU MAY KISS THE BRIDE.” THE MINISTER’S WARM VOICE rang out through the crowd seated on the white, cushioned chairs.

I blinked back an errant tear and swallowed the lump in my throat. Kelsey, my best friend since sophomore year at Palm Springs High, was now married to Peter, the man of her dreams.

My eyes shifted and met Will’s over the couple’s heads, and I forced myself to hold back the sigh his mere presence conjured up. Will, the one that stole my heart almost ten years ago but was never mine. Life and silly childhood promises always got in the way. Or maybe it was the fact that

Will was never lacking a significant other? I was sure he didn't spend his time pining for me the way I did for him.

His gaze fixed on me, and I felt my body heat under his examination. After all these years, I still couldn't stop myself from reacting to Will Henderson, even with Kelsey this close by.

Thoughts of Kelsey reminded me to avert my eyes and focus on the happy event.

Kelsey had been dreaming of this day for as long as I could remember. Each detail had been meticulously prepared, and it was nice to see how it had all come together. From the way the flowers were perfectly arranged around the seating area, to the arch she now kissed her husband under rather dramatically. I stifled a smile. That was Kelsey. Whatever she did, she went all out. Even with her rule. She never held back. By the throat-clearing in the crowd, I suspected her mother was eager for her to end the passionate display of affection. But Kelsey would pull back when she was ready to, and not a second sooner.

My eyes, drawn to him like a magnet, landed on Will again. He caught my smile and returned it, a silent communication passing between us. Will and I had been friends as long as Kelsey and I had, from that first day in high school. It was typical to have these kinds of silent conversations back in the day when we were still kids. As adults, Kelsey and I were still stuck to the hip, but Will had moved away to get his dentistry degree and had returned back home only a little over six months ago. Still, it never ceased to amaze me how well he could read me with one glance.

Kelsey and Peter must have broken apart because the



crowd erupted in loud applause, accompanied by hollering and whistling. Our gazes stayed glued to each other a beat longer as I almost got lost in his blue eyes. I could look into them forever, if I were allowed such a luxury. The corners of his lips tugged upward, drawing my gaze to his mouth and the memories I forced myself to forget. Why, oh why did I have to be attracted to him still? You'd think almost ten years would be enough time to get over the one I could never have. Or maybe that's why I still longed for him. Because I knew he was forbidden. He winked, and I felt my stupid cheeks heat. The scoundrel. He knew exactly what he was doing, and I loved and hated him for it. Ugh. I faced the crowd. Nothing could come of drawing out the moment, so why torture myself?

As Kelsey's best friend, I was her maid of honor and at her beck and call today, just as I had been the past few months leading up to the wedding. Honestly, I would be happy when tonight was over. I was beyond ready to put all this wedding stuff behind me—including the bride's handsome brother. I loved Kels, but if I had to have one more conversation about the difference between teal and cerulean, I was going to die. Literally die.

Will, as Kelsey's brother and Peter's friend, had been handed the role of groomsman. A much easier task, if you asked me. No endless dress fittings, appointments at the florist, assistance with the seating arrangements...

All of the planning had convinced me even more that I wanted to keep it simple when I planned my wedding. Not that marriage was in my immediate future. Or even far-out future. I didn't even have a date for tonight. At twenty-six, I

still had time, right? I chanted the words like a mantra as I followed Kelsey down the aisle, intent on making the rest of her day perfect. Kels deserved a perfect day.

“We’re ready to snap a few pictures.” The photographer addressed the happy couple, and Kelsey’s grin spread from ear to ear. I knew she would settle down once she got this far. She’d been a nervous wreck last night, convinced something would happen to prevent her from tying the knot. Luckily, she’d calmed down.

“Shall we get some of you two first?” The photographer slung his bag over his shoulder, a camera already waiting in his hand. “The lighting is just right to get a few good shots with the mountains in the background.”

“Perfect,” Kelsey’s eager voice rang out. She took hold of Peter’s hand and followed behind the photographer.

“I’ll go check on the cake.” I caught Kelsey’s attention before she got too far out of hearing range.

“Sure. But don’t stay away too long. Remember, I want to get some pictures of us on my special day. Me and my bestie.” Kelsey’s smile split her face in two, and my heart warmed. She really was the best.

“I’ll only be a sec,” I called out over my shoulder as I took off. I tried to move as fast as possible without getting my heels stuck in the grass as I hurried across the lawn that led to the country club.

I made a beeline for the back entrance and sprang out of the way to avoid a waiter on his way out of the kitchen, balancing a tray of hors d’oeuvres in his hands.

“I let you out of my sight for one minute, and already you

almost ruin a perfectly great tray of stuffed mushrooms, Charles?”

I didn't need to turn around to know who had spoken. If the voice didn't give him away, there was only one person in the world that would ignore using my given name and call me Charles, just to get a rise out of me. Will had an uncanny talent of sneaking up on me when I least expected it, delivering a line that sounded like melted chocolate with that husky voice of his. Most women swooned in his presence, especially when he worked his magic. I was not one of them. Well, at least not that I let *him* see. I'd known him too long and had trained myself to not give in to his charm. I'd been weak once before. Never again.

“You know me. I'm useless without you.” I laid on the sarcasm, and to add an extra push, I added, “William.”

It was our thing. Will riled me up by calling me Charles, I retaliated by calling him William. It was a childish habit we'd yet to outgrow.

Will's face broke out into a wide grin, and I felt a flutter in my belly. No surprise there. He had that effect on me. He'd caught my attention that first day in high school, before I even met Kelsey. Who wouldn't notice those ice-blue eyes and short, blond curls? It didn't hurt that he had a broad chest with toned abs. I knew; I'd seen them up close many, many times. Be still my heart!

A female server passed with another tray, momentarily breaking up the intense stare-down between us. I took the opportunity to catch my breath and remind myself that Will was off limits. I would remain strong.

Will's eyes followed the female staff member's retreating

form. She turned back and caught his eyes on her. I couldn't blame her for turning back to take another look. The man was a nearly perfect specimen—absolute eye candy. He gave her his classic look, the one that made women want to have his babies, and her cheeks darkened.

Instead of watching their exchange, I focused on Will. I'd seen him work his charm for almost a decade. I knew he was a player. So why did I let him get to me like this?

Without another word, I turned from the familiar scene. I was done having my heart crushed, as much as I hated to admit he still possessed the power to crush it. I walked the last steps to the kitchen. The chaos inside was what I would have expected with the amount of guests Kelsey and Peter had invited.

I was careful to keep out of the way of the action; I didn't want to find out if pomegranate glaze would wash out of my blush-pink dress. I sidestepped the last of the people standing between me, and the reason I'd stepped into the kitchen in the first place, and breathed a sigh of relief.

"You did great." Will's voice sounded in my ears, causing the skin on my back to break out in goose bumps. I could barely hear the rest of the clamoring and bustling going on in the kitchen as my heart pounded in my chest. I turned to face him, and my eyes widened as I noticed him standing right behind me. With the four-inch heels Kelsey had insisted I wear with the dress, my eyes landed right on his lips. *No! Just no!* I forced them up, before my mind strayed to other places I kept safely locked up.

"It really looks amazing." Will's voice sounded hoarse.

His gaze dipped down to my lips before returning to my eyes and staring straight at me.

I swallowed and faced forward, back to the purpose of my venturing away from the wedding party. "I love how it turned out."

After spending countless hours preparing and assembling that cake, I couldn't have accepted anything but perfection for Kelsey's big day. She deserved the very best. Lord knew after all the nights I'd spent crying on her shoulder, a perfect cake was the least I could offer. And as the baker, and owner of Char's Sweets and Treats, it was my job to deliver that.

Kelsey had insisted on a traditional chocolate cake with chocolate frosting and a white fondant finish. I'd kept the design simple and sleek, covering each layer in fondant and decorating the whole cake with a large, white rose that had petals flowing into each layer. It looked picture-perfect, if I said so myself.

I wouldn't have stressed so much about a cake, but I didn't make wedding cakes often, and I had been designing and going over ideas with her for months, ever since I promised Kels I'd take care of it.

"We better get back." I turned away from the cake, glad my mind was set at ease and proud that I'd managed to speak without my voice betraying the effect Will's presence was having on me. Sadly, I was too quick to rejoice. Twisting brought me almost chest to chest with Will. I couldn't step back and knock the cake down, and Will made no attempt to move.

"Kels will be wondering where we are." I gestured with

my hand, trying to create some much-needed space between us.

“Yeah,” Will replied, not making a move.

“Come on, Will.” I placed my hand on his chest and gave him a small push. I wasn’t prepared for the jolt of electricity that attacked my system as I touched his firm muscles. I had to remind myself to let go and pull my hand back and not linger and run my fingers over the hard planes of his chest—the hard planes I’d checked out countless times and possibly dreamt of even more. Ugh, this man was a distraction.

“Right behind you, Charles.” That one word had the power to rein in my wandering thoughts and get me back on track.

Will moved to the side, just enough to let me pass and almost brush up against him. Honestly, how could he have me flustered one minute and ready to smack him the next? I’d never met anyone like him.

The moment I walked out of the kitchen, I breathed in the fresh California air to rid my system of Will’s intoxicating cologne. I moved as fast as the white-strap sandals would take me, needing to clear my thoughts. I cursed Kelsey for her insistence on my ridiculous footwear. I never wore such high heels. I preferred flats. But Kelsey was all about fashion, even if it meant excruciating pain to achieve the perfect outfit.

“There you are.” Kelsey’s face relaxed as she saw me approach.

“I was only gone a sec.” I tried hard to keep the bite out of my tone. Kelsey didn’t need attitude from me. Just because my feet were killing me and Will was messing with my head

didn't mean I should snap at her. Kelsey's brows pulled together as she stared past me.

"You know Charles, always getting up to something." Will's smooth voice sounded from behind me, but I didn't turn around to address him. He was always baiting me, and I wasn't in the mood to rise to the challenge.

"Leave her alone, Will. Aren't you getting too old to be teasing her like that?" Kels was quick to come to my defense, as she beckoned me to her. "They're ready to take our pictures." Kels looped her arm in mine and spun me in the opposite direction to the waiting photographer, his camera slung around his neck. I smiled and laughed through the many clicks. I tightened my hold on Kels and I felt my heart swell at her thoughtfulness to include pictures of us on her special day.

The photographer soon called the full bridal party over, positioning us together and snapping the pictures Kelsey still wanted to get. I had to admit, with the sun almost setting and not a cloud in the sky, the backdrop was breathtaking. Kels would have her dreamlike pictures to always remember her special day.

"Let's party." Peter clapped his hands together and indicated we join the rest of the guests for the festivities. I was fine with that. All the smiling and posing under the hot sun had left me thirsty and ready to kick back and enjoy some food. All that was left was getting the cake out in one piece, but I was counting on the kitchen staff to pull that off without any help from me.

“THIS CAKE TASTES AMAZING,” MAMIE SAID IN BETWEEN bites. “Just right.”

“I was taught by the best.” I winked as I took a small taste, setting the fork down on my plate. I’d had a little too much of the Tuscan-roasted chicken entrée. I’d helped Kels choose between the different dinner options the club offered and had preferred that dish above all others. Bless Kelsey’s heart for spoiling me by picking the dish I liked the most.

“I may have taught you the basics of baking, but you have real skill, dear. You’re a natural.”

“Just like my grandma.” I rested my arm on Mamie’s shoulders and pulled her in for a sideways hug. She was much smaller than me, but seated next to me, she made it past my shoulder. Perfect for a good squeeze.

“I better get home.” Mamie stifled a yawn. “It’s getting too late for an old woman like me.”

“But you’ll miss all the dancing,” I protested.

“That’s for all the young people.” Her eyes twinkled, and she reached out her hand to rest it on my face. Her touch took me back in time, reminding me of all the times she’d comforted me as a child. Her touch still held that same magical power.

“You have to stay.” I didn’t want Mamie to leave just yet. Of all the people here, she was my favorite.

“You can’t possibly be leaving already.” Will joined us, dropping down onto the seat next to me. His arm slid on the back of my chair so easily, like it was the most natural thing in the world. The skin on my back tingled, feeling his hand brush up against me. Curse Kelsey for insisting on the dress with the bare back. I’d wanted the one that covered me up a



little more, but she'd picked this one, claiming it would show my summer tan better. It definitely did. A bit more of it than I liked.

"It's been a long day," Mamie said. "Time for me to go home and get some rest."

"What about the dance you promised me?" Will pouted. I hated to admit it, but he looked even sexier with his mouth twisting down like that and his bottom lip sticking out.

Ugh, what was wrong with me? I needed to stop staring at that man's mouth.

"I'm sure there are plenty of ladies here to dance with." Mamie pushed herself up out of her seat and bent down in front of Will. She rested her hand on his cheek and, with a knowing grin, she said, "Some within arms' reach."

I shook my head. Mamie knew why I steered clear of Will, but she never missed an opportunity to broach the subject, however subtle.

"I'm sure I can find at least one to soften the blow of your rejection, Mamie." Will stood up and engulfed Mamie in his arms, almost swallowing her in his large hold. He bent down and dropped a kiss on her cheek, and a burst of rich laughter erupted from Mamie's mouth as she broke free of his grasp.

"Always such a charmer with the ladies, Will."

And that was the problem. Or, at least, one of them. Will was amazing at delivering the perfect line to wrap you around his finger. Even Mamie seemed taken in by him. It was his follow-through that proved to be problematic.

"Have a wonderful night, Charlotte." Mamie enfolded me in a tight hug and kissed me good-bye.

“I love that woman.” Will stepped next to me, filling the void Mamie left.

“She loves you, too.” I chuckled.

The evening air cooled as the sun made its descent for the day. Soon the stars would make an appearance, adding even more of a magical feel to the evening festivities.

“Charlotte.” Will’s soft utterance of my name interrupted my rambling thoughts. I turned to make a flippant comment about him using my full name for once, but as I faced him, my lips parted and no words came. Instead, our eyes connected and held, my pulse quickening

The sound of the music faded to the background as Will continued to stare. Something about the intensity of the moment cut off any witty comment I might have made. I couldn’t get past his fierce blue gaze fixed on me. I searched his face, hoping to read what it was he was trying to communicate.

“There you are.” Kelsey ambushed me from the side, startling me and interrupting whatever had just happened between Will and me.

“Here I am.” I cleared my throat. “What’s up?” I questioned, glad for the evening sky and limited lighting that hid my heated face. Kelsey was the main reason Will was off limits. I didn’t need her catching me with stars in my eyes as I ogled her brother. Not only had I promised not to date her brother, I knew she was afraid his player ways would end up putting a strain on our relationship. Because, let’s face it, Will was never serious about the women he dated. No way would we last. And how would that affect our friendship?

“Peter’s brother was looking for you. He wanted to dance

with you. He's such a good dancer. He took a class in college, did I tell you?"

I just smiled. She'd already told me this at least four times tonight.

"Ah, there he is. Come on. Oh, and Will." Kelsey paused. "April and Sophie were asking after you. You might want to go find them. I'm sure they'd be happy to catch up." Kelsey stressed the words *catch up*, causing images from high school of Will dating both April and Sophie to flash through my mind and make my heart squeeze. Kelsey got over them dating Will because they were never tight. Not like Kels and I were. Sophie and April were on the cheerleading squad with Kels. How could Will resist that kind of temptation?

Kelsey didn't waste a second as she snatched me by my hand, dragging me along with her. Peter's brother—Trevor, I think his name was—smiled at us before Kelsey yanked me in front of her and shot out with, "I found her."

We both smiled awkwardly at each other. Kelsey had that effect on people.

"Want to dance?"

I hesitated only a second, still distracted. I shook it off, like all the other times I'd tried to shake Will out of my system, and replied, "Sure."

Wishful yearning would get me nowhere.

I placed my hand in Trevor's and noticed his face light up. It helped push those confusing thoughts to the very back of my mind, where they belonged.