



ONLY LOVE CAN
BREAK YOUR
HEART

KATHERINE WEBBER



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CHAPTER 1

SHE STILL WAKES ME TO watch the sunrise.

Not every morning, but often enough. There are so many things we can't do together anymore. But this, we can still do this.

"Reiko," my sister, Mika, whispers in my ear. "Reiko, wake up. We'll miss it!"

My room is already filling with that hazy pre-dawn light that means the sun will be peeking out over the mountains in a few minutes.

"Hurry," Mika says, bouncing on her toes. She's wearing the same yellow cotton dress she always wears. No matter what time it is or what the weather is like. She's always in the same yellow dress.

I groan but get out of bed, pulling on the blue silk robe hanging on the back of my chair. I open my window, and then, glancing back to make sure Mika is still there, pop the screen out and slip onto the roof of my garage.

Mika crawls out after me, and we sit at the edge, her legs dangling off, mine tucked under me, and watch the sunrise over the

mountains. The golden red light turns the palm trees into silhouettes across the desert.

Mika scoots closer to me and rests her head on my shoulder. She's more affectionate in the mornings. Less sassy, more snuggly.

I yawn and put my head on hers.

"I'll never get sick of watching the sunrise," Mika says softly.

"Me either," I say.

"It's like magic every morning."

I nod, watching the sky change color right before my eyes. Then I yawn again. "There are few things I'd wake up this early for, but a desert sunrise is one of them."

Mika pulls back to face me, her dark, wide eyes unblinking. "But you'd wake up for me, right? It's not the sunrise that gets you up?"

It's early May in Palm Springs, so the morning is warm, but her words send a chill through me. I wrap my arm around her thin shoulders. "Of course, Mika," I say. "Always."

"Good. Because I'd do anything for you."

This is the truest thing in my life.

And all I can do in return is smile and squeeze her hand. I love her so much it makes my heart feel like a balloon that's about to burst. It hurts, how much I love her.

Mika stands, pulling me up with her. She lets go of my hand and tiptoes along the edge of the roof, balancing like a tightrope walker. Then she glances over her shoulder at me with a mischievous grin. "Dare me to jump?" she says, lifting a foot and leaning precariously over the side, arms out like a scarecrow.

“Mika!” I say, grabbing her wrist and pulling her back toward me. Back toward safety.

She laughs. “Oh, come on, Reiko. It isn’t that high. You climb higher, right? When you go rock climbing?” Her eyes are curious and hungry. Hungry for a world that she can’t exist in anymore.

Because she can’t go anywhere with me. Can’t even leave our house.

Because my sister, Mika—the Mika I see, the Mika I’m standing next to, the Mika I love with all of my heart, the Mika I’d do anything for—is dead.