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—Sarah Ockler,

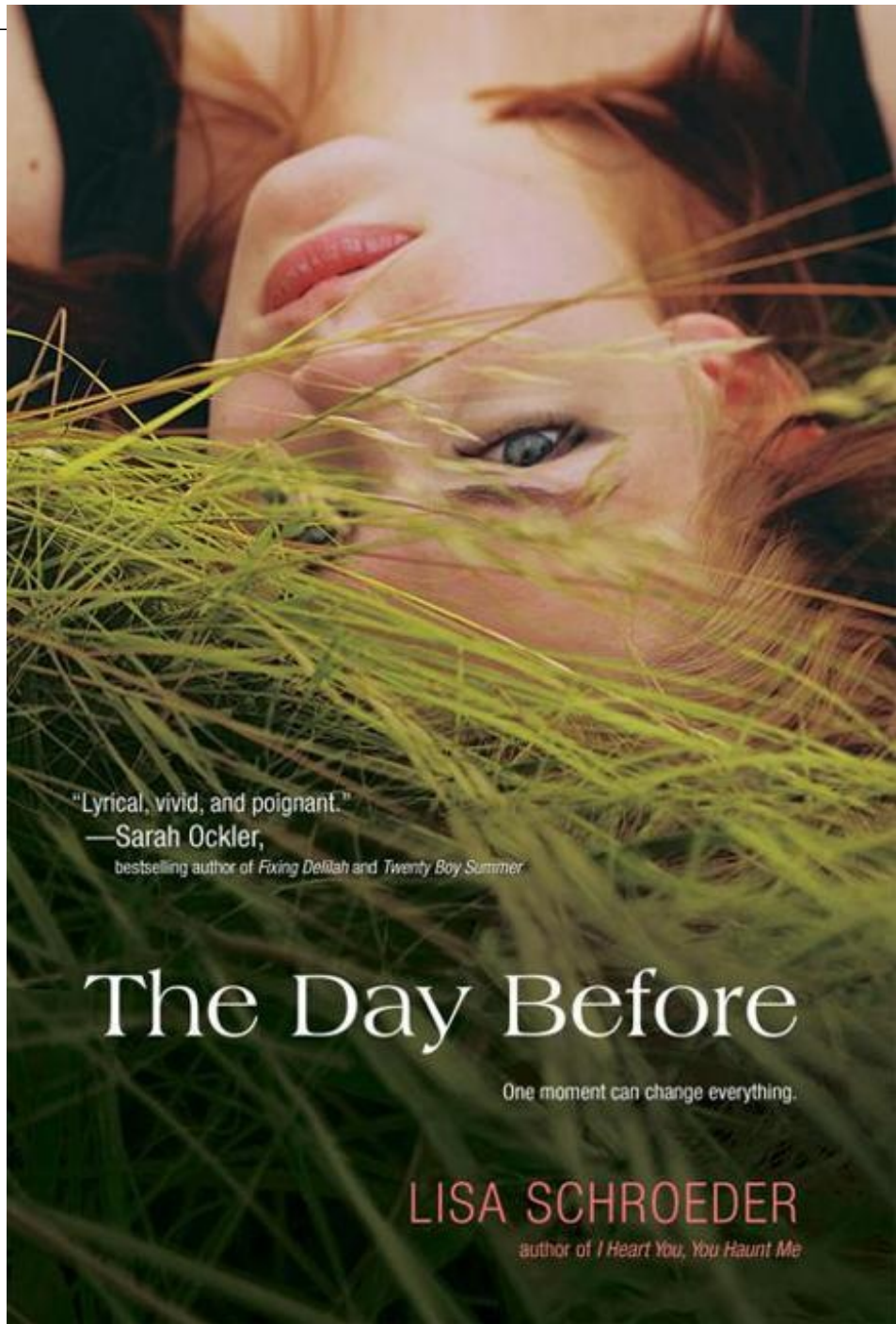
bestselling author of *Fixing Delilah* and *Twenty Boy Summer*

The Day Before

One moment can change everything.

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AMBER'S LIFE IS SPINNING OUT OF CONTROL.

All she wants is to turn up the volume on her iPod until all of the demands of family and friends fade away. So she sneaks off to the beach to spend a day by herself.

Then Amber meets Cade. Their attraction is instant, and Amber can tell he's also looking for an escape. Together they decide to share a perfect day: no pasts, no fears, no regrets.

The more time that Amber spends with Cade, the more she's drawn to him. And the more she's troubled by his darkness. Because Cade's not just living in the now—he's living each moment like it's his last.

LISA SCHROEDER is the author of *Chasing Brooklyn*, *Far from You*, and *I Heart You, You Haunt Me*, a 2009 ALA Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Adult Readers. She is also the author of two middle-grade novels. Lisa loves to write in verse because it allows her to really get at the emotional core of the story. She is grateful to all of the people who have read her books and told their friends about them, since being an author is more fun than ponies or waterslides (most of the time, anyway). Lisa lives in Oregon with her husband and two sons. You can visit her on the web at lisaschroederbooks.com.

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SIMON & SCHUSTER, NEW YORK

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The Day Before

I Heart You, You Haunt Me

Far from You

Chasing Brooklyn

The Day Before

LISA SCHROEDER

Simon Pulse

New York London Toronto Sydney

This book is a work of fiction. Any references to historical events, real people, or real locales are used fictitiously. Other names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination, and any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.



SIMON PULSE

An imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division
1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

www.SimonandSchuster.com

First Simon Pulse hardcover edition June 2011

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Designed by Mike Rosamilia

The text of this book was set in Adobe Garamond.

Manufactured in the United States of America

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Schroeder, Lisa.

The day before / Lisa Schroeder.—1st Simon Pulse hardcover ed.

p. cm.

Summary: Sixteen-year-old Amber, hoping to spend one perfect day alone at the beach before her world is turned upside down, meets and feels a strong connection to Cade, who is looking for his own escape, for a very different reason.

ISBN 978-1-4424-1743-4

[1. Novels in verse. 2. Interpersonal relations—Fiction. 3.

Beaches—Fiction. 4. Family life—Oregon—Fiction. 5. Oregon—Fiction.]

I. Title.

PZ7.5.S37Day 2011

[Fic]—dc22

2010034567

ISBN 978-1-4424-1745-8 (eBook)

This one is for all of you
who feel the fear and do it anyway,
in writing and in life.
You inspire me!

The Day Before

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Acknowledgments

Annette Pollert, thank you so much for your enthusiasm and all of your work to make this book the best it could be. On every page you pushed me—kindly and gently—but you pushed, and for that I'm incredibly grateful.

Sara Crowe, I cannot express how much I appreciate your rock solid support and belief in me. A million times, thank you.

Cindy Hanson of the Oregon Coast Aquarium, thank you for your help with my research. Any errors in regards to your fantastic facility are mine, and mine alone.

Bryan Bliss, thanks for asking around and helping me check very important facts. It's true—you're awesome.

Finally, I want to thank all of my fans who lift me up with kind words and deeds. People like Maddie, Alex, Kathleen, Sara, Jack, Alyson, Candace, Avonlea, Teresa, Hailee, Skyanne, Anna, Maryanne, Elizabeth, Jessica, Katie, James, Emma, Jasmine, Kristen, Lauren, Delaney, Savannah, and many other wonderful people. Your support means the world to me, really and truly.

a different kind of day

Some mornings,
it's hard to get
out of bed.

Sleep lures you
like a stranger
with a piece of candy.

Follow me.
It will be okay.
I promise.

You know better,
but still you follow,
because you really do
love candy.

When you finally
open your eyes,
late for everything
and your whole day
screwed,
you curse that bastard,
Mr. Sandman.

It's happened to me
a hundred times.
But not today.

Today was different.

Anticipation is the best
alarm there is, and it shook
me awake before
my phone even had
the chance.

As I move around my room

with my iPod on and earbuds in,
my girl P!nk sings strong,
and I feel like I have
superpowers.

The power to
let myself go,
let myself be,
let myself live
the next
twenty-four hours
in a way
I have never lived
before.

ready, set, go

In the bathroom
I get myself ready,
quiet as a sunrise.

I grab my backpack
containing
the essentials—
extra clothes,
just in case;
my drumsticks,
just because;
my camera,
just for fun;
and a box of jelly beans,
just like always.

I s l i n k
into the dark kitchen,
clutching the note
I wrote last night.

I thought of everything.

The note goes in front
of the food-splattered
Betty Crocker Cookbook
that sits on a stand
in the middle of the counter,
like a revered queen on her throne.

The hardest part
is unlocking the door,
walking out,
and leaving it all behind me.

There's a moment
when the dead bolt clicks
and I

freeze,

waiting to hear
if footsteps
will follow.

The footsteps don't come,

so I go.

practice makes perfect, I hope

So long.
Good-bye.
See ya later.

Every day
for the past month,
when I've left the house,
I've tried to pretend
it was the day.

So long, Mom.
I'll think of you
when I watch movies,
see birds in the sky,
and read all your motherly notes
that I've saved over the years.

Good-bye, Kelly.
I'll think of you
when I hear a violin's song,
see a pile of library books,
and remember all the secrets we've whispered
since we were small.

And even though
he doesn't live here anymore,
I still say to him,
See ya later, Dad.
I'll think of you
when I hear about the latest techie gadget,
watch a Mariners' game,
and bravely confront the spiders
you used to battle for me.

Today I think the words.

Tomorrow they'll expect me to say them.
I hope I can say them.

good morning

The chilly air
slides its arms around
my warm, anxious body,
and as I breathe in
its faint floral scent,
I feel myself begin
to relax.

While Mom watched
the news last night,
I stayed and watched too,
instead of retreating
to my drum set.
The weatherman said
it's supposed to be nice today.
A sunny day in March,
a rare treat for Oregon.
Next week is spring break.

It'll be raining by then.

Sure as Mom will be
curled up on the sofa
with her afghan,
drinking tea by the gallon,
watching movie after movie,
and hoping,
wishing,
praying for an escape
from the heartbreak,
it will
r
a
i
n

I walk down the sidewalk
of Englewood Avenue.
Ten years of memories
line the street
and wave.

Images
of riding bikes,
jumping rope,
playing hide-and-seek
swarm my brain
like bees.

I shake my head and walk faster.

When I turn the corner,
the limousine is waiting.

The driver says, "Good morning."
My response to him
is quick and awkward,
the way it is
when I have to say
those words to someone
I don't know.

And then I tell myself,
You better get used to it.

Three years ago

Dear Amber,

It breaks our hearts that you don't want to meet us. We are hurt, but we also understand that it is a big shock. Perhaps you just need more time to get used to the idea.

We think about you every day, and have so many questions for you. What do you look like? What activities do you enjoy? What foods are your favorite?

I will tell you a little bit about us, and maybe as we move toward meeting one another, it will help you to not be so afraid.

The most important thing to know about me is that I love children. I have been a child-care provider for over twenty years. I get notes from parents telling me those first children I cared for years ago are now doing well in college!

Allen also loves children, and has spent his life working in the educational system as a teacher, a vice principal, and now, for the past few years, a principal. He is the kindest man you'll ever meet. He has a big heart with a huge capacity to love.

We'd love to hear from you. Please write back? I've enclosed our contact information along with our picture. I thought you might be curious about us the way we are curious about you.

We really hope to hear from you.

Love,

Jeanie and Allen

only good things

I don't have to tell the driver
where we're going.
He knows.
I arranged this weeks ago.

Since there's no bus
that goes to the beach,
my choices were
a taxi or a limo.
I chose the limo
because the next
twenty-four hours
are not about
holding back,
being cheap,
thinking hard,
taking crap,
feeling bad.

They're about
being me,
loving life,
finding joy,
playing hard,
taking risks,
and who knows what else.

To plan it all
would take away from
the fun and excitement
of what's to come.

Let the day
reveal itself to me
in its own time,
in its own way.

I am yours, Today.

I am yours.

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