

# WE NEVER SAID GOODBYE



# We Never Said Goodbye

First published in 2017 by Fridhem Publishing

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Copyright © H elene Fermont 2017

The moral rights of the author have been asserted in accordance with  
the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All characters and events in this publication, other than those in the public  
domain, are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead,  
is purely coincidental.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system,  
or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical,  
photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission in  
writing of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or  
cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition  
including this condition being imposed on the subsequent publisher.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Paperback ISBN

978-0-9954907-2-7 E book ISBN

978-0-9954907-3-4

Typeset by Elipsis Digital Limited, Glasgow  
Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Limited, Bungay, Suffolk

[www.fridhempublishing.com](http://www.fridhempublishing.com)

*For everyone who saw me through the hardest of  
times.  
You know who you are.  
May your lives be blessed with love, laughter and  
joy.  
H.*



# Chapter One

*June 2014*

“**W**here is he? Mike’s never late. Perhaps he forgot today’s our wedding anniversary?”

Louise looked around at her spacious kitchen, with its new wallpaper in a pale shade of blue, the rustic old table and chairs. Smiling, she reached for the mobile on a shelf above the stove. *He’s probably booked a table in some fancy restaurant, I bet it’s the new French bistro in the high street*, she thought, slumping down in a chair and stretching her long, shapely legs. She couldn’t avoid seeing her own reflection in the glass cupboard next to the sink.

Big blue eyes, small, slightly upturned nose and short, thick blonde hair – Louise’s mind drifted off to when she used to be a model. She’d long since stopped thinking about it, until now.

She missed the glitz and fun back then. In particular, the sense of belonging and making new friends, both in her hometown of Malmö, and overseas. Not forgetting the lovely clothes, especially those she had been allowed to keep from Chanel, Lagerfeld and Yves Saint Laurent.

All of it seemed so long ago now. Almost as if none of it took place; a figment of her imagination.

She’d made an extra effort to look her best that morning,

hoping Mike would appreciate it. She'd even gone as far as applying false eyelashes and the shade of lipstick he preferred. At forty-five, Louise dreaded signs of age on her face, making her feel less attractive and not as young as she used to be. *Perhaps the time has come when I will have to consider a nip and tuck here and there?* she pondered, chewing her lip. The years passed so quickly; nearly everyone she knew from her modelling days had since succumbed to Botox and plastic surgery.

After her retirement, Louise felt bereft and at a loss as to what to do with her life. Eventually, she and her best friend, a fellow model, decided to venture into business together. Trine Larsen had been a permanent fixture in Louise's life ever since the two of them met at a mutual friend's party in Copenhagen in the early nineties. They'd hit it off from the start and were like sisters to one another. Taking the ferry from Malmö, Louise would seek out Trine's company each time she required advice and felt lonely. Both women relocated to London on a modelling assignment and loved it so much that they decided to stay. When Trine met Jasper, a champion rugby player and fellow Dane, Louise instantly warmed to his easy-going nature and gained another friend. However, after Trine and Jasper married in a register office in Kensington, Louise felt like an outsider, wishing she too could meet and fall in love with someone as nice and reliable as Jasper.

She continued modelling for another agency and signed a contract with a magazine that required her to travel all over Europe for a period of time. Upon returning to London and the cosy flat she and Trine had rented when they first moved to London, Louise was invited to a party in Belsize Park. It wasn't until she was standing by herself in a corner of the large, brightly-lit room that she noticed a tall, muscular man with mousy blond hair, wearing a black suit, white T-shirt and a gold chain around his

## WE NEVER SAID GOODBYE

neck. As he approached her, a big grin lighting up his deep-set dark blue eyes, Louise heard him say: “I feel as if I know you. Have we met before?”

Twiddling with her bracelet, Louise blushed and shook her head. “I doubt it. What makes you think we did?” She’d never encountered anyone as straightforward as Mike Kershaw.

“Call it intuition, if you like. It feels as if I’ve known you all my life.”

Well, that was twenty-three years ago and the start of something special.

As he wined and dined her in the most prestigious restaurants and nightclubs in London, she fell deeply in love and it wasn’t long before she moved into his small yet elegant pad in Bermondsey. The apartment was located only a few blocks from where he was born and had lived with his parents, until his father died and Mike inherited the family car lot. They married a year after they first met and Trine was Louise’s maid of honour at the small church in Bethnal Green.

*Why am I taking a trip down memory lane?* Louise wondered. It wasn’t like her to dwell on the past. She’d left all of it behind when she’d moved away from Malmö, where her parents lived their whole lives. Louise kept her maiden name, Berg, after she married Mike; it was common for Swedish women to not abandon their surname and a tribute to Louise’s heritage.

When Louise and Trine first retired, both women attempted to find work yet neither warmed to the idea of being employees. Passing an empty shop on Fulham Road, they knew instantly fate had steered them there. By then both of them led interesting lives with husbands who worked hard: Mike at the car lot he’d turned into a limousine service with his oldest friend, Steve; and Jasper had retired from his playing career, launching a rugby coaching

---

## HÉLENE FERMONT

programme for players all over Europe. In his spare time Jasper bought derelict buildings that he converted and put up for sale.

The two couples spent almost every weekend together and when Trine and Jasper had their first child, Zack, the family moved to Putney and into a large four-storey building where they soon had another child, Emilia, then two years later, Christian.

Around the time of Christian's birth, Louise persuaded Mike to move from Belsize Park to Barnes in southwest London, close to Hammersmith. Their new house was situated just off the high street, with lots of Swedes living in the area and a Swedish school nearby. After much deliberation, Mike relented to Louise's wish and commuted each day between Barnes and the business in Bermondsey. There were times when Louise felt guilty for forcing him into moving away from his beloved north London to Barnes, where he'd never envisaged they'd move into a house that Louise bought with funds from her modelling career. Indeed, the idea that he may resent her for it stayed with her for some time, yet as the years passed by, Louise stopped blaming herself and felt certain that Mike enjoyed living there as much as she did.

By then she and Trine had turned their clothes shop into a roaring success. Focusing on Scandinavian fashion designers, they regularly placed orders with Filippa K, House of Dagmar, Back's Designs and many more exclusive and trendy labels that were all the rage.

The Studio was their baby and their dream come true. They'd used their own money to refurbish the premises in shades of white, grey and silver. It wasn't long before The Studio became *the* place to shop for designer clothes. When *Vogue* described it as, "the most exciting boutique to shop in", women came rushing in to see it and spread the word. Louise and Trine's interior design investment soon turned into a goldmine, with clients queuing up

## WE NEVER SAID GOODBYE

outside the door, everyone eager to purchase the latest trends by designers they'd barely heard of until The Studio became an institution among the models and celebrities in Fulham and the neighbouring areas.

No matter how hard they worked to maintain their standards, Louise and Trine never fell out with each other. As tall and slim as her friend, Trine had long brown hair, freckles on her nose and was prone to wear tight-fitting jeans in whatever colourful shades fashion dictated at the time. With big brown eyes and a broad mouth, Trine always saw the best in people and rarely commented on their personal lives. Both women met up regularly for coffee or *fika*, the Swedish word for having a snack outside of work.

*Where is he? Surely, Mike's not forgotten today is our twentieth wedding anniversary?* Walking upstairs to the master bedroom, Louise contemplated how lucky she was to be married to a man who took pride in his appearance and worked hard. *He'll make it up to me. Mike and Steve must be caught up in some meeting*, she told herself, changing into a pair of black leather slacks and a lacy top.

However many times Mike insisted she wear a skirt or dress, showing off her long legs and figure, Louise preferred trousers and casual wear.

Putting on flat black shoes, she made the effort to apply makeup just the way he liked it, with smoky eyes and bronzer on her cheekbones, then brushed her hair until it shone.

*Twenty years. Time sure flies.* Louise wondered if he'd got caught up with a client. It was almost 6.00 pm and still no sign of him and his car.

She'd rushed home in her new BMW convertible, a gift she'd bestowed on herself when she turned forty-five. Returning downstairs to the kitchen, Louise looked outside the window, expecting to see his car in the driveway.

HÉLENE FERMONT

Recently, Mike had splashed out on a silver Jaguar, claiming it was appropriate when he met up with prestigious clients. The black limousine Mike's father had bought for him when Mike gained his driver's licence was too old and battered to drive for the Managing Director of a high-end carservice.

As she climbed the stairs once more, Louise felt butterflies in the pit of her stomach. She reached for the eau de toilette on the glass shelf in her en suite bathroom and spritzed it on her neck, behind the ears and wrists. *This isn't like him . . . I know we've not spent much time together lately. What if he's upset with me? Maybe it's the reason he hasn't called?*

That morning, Mike had left before she got up. She'd caught a glimpse of him the previous night, just before he told her he'd been so late back due to a meeting. As he finished a mug of black coffee, he'd mumbled, "We'll talk in the morning," his eyes not meeting hers.

"Is something wrong?" she'd replied, searching for a sign that he wasn't upset with her. "It's our anniversary tomorrow. Let's do something special to celebrate it. Just you and me." She was aware that lately The Studio had taken up much of her attention with her and Trine working overtime most nights.

"Sure, I'll give you a call." Mike had taken his coffee mug to the kitchen before Louise could respond.

Now that she thought of it, Louise felt certain Mike was hiding something from her.

It was at times like this she wished her parents were alive. They'd died on their way to a friend's wedding in Vienna when their car collided with a van. The teenager driving it was found guilty of having too much alcohol in his system. In less than a few minutes, Louise lost her parents and everything they'd shared.

She'd just turned twenty and almost lost her will to live.

## WE NEVER SAID GOODBYE

Everything she looked forward to when they were alive suddenly ceased to exist. After she'd received the terrible news of the fatal accident, Louise made up her mind there and then to leave Malmö for good. All her precious memories no longer mattered after she lost the two people who meant everything to her.

Except for her father's sister, Louise had no family left to care for her. Aunt Gabriella often called yet it was years since the two of them last met and spent time together. If it had not been for her closest friends and modelling career, Louise wouldn't have coped.

Seated on the edge of the large double bed, she let out a big sigh. *I miss Mamma and Pappa so much*, she thought. *No matter how*

*long they've been gone, I'll never get over losing them.*

Elin and Simon Berg never had the opportunity to experience their only child's career and success. They'd not met Mike and never would. Louise hoped that they would have approved of him. She'd never seen anyone as much in love as they were.

Her parents were the perfect match. They'd doted on their daughter and wanted the best for her. Just as fair and slim as their child, Elin and Simon were eternal optimists and romantics.

*Trine's always reminding me I ought to visit Gabriella. Malmö's so different nowadays, I'll probably not recognise it . . . It's almost seven o'clock. I'd better call him at work.* Louise dialled Mike's number on her mobile.

Steve picked up on the third ring. "Kershaw & Matthews Limousine Service."

"It's me, Louise. Is Mike still at work?" Deep inside, Louise knew something was wrong. Mike had never let her down on their wedding anniversary until now. But Steve's response made her gasp.

"Mike's not come in to work since last week." There was an edge to his voice.

HÉLENE FERMONT

“I don’t understand . . . Mike told me you’ve a lot of clients to look after. You’re seriously telling me he’s not been around for a week?” Louise’s heart was beating frantically inside her chest.

“I assumed he’d told you,” Steve replied in his usual direct manner.

“I don’t get it . . . I’m sorry I called and disrupted you.”

“That’s okay. Mike’s probably got something up his sleeve! Happy anniversary, darling.”

Switching off her mobile, Louise let out another sigh. *Mike knows today’s a special day. I’ll give him more time to return home.* Recalling all the times he’d surprised her over the years in the most spectacular ways, she was on her way downstairs when her mobile rang. Mike’s name was displayed on the screen.

Louise held her breath for a moment, a sense of foreboding overwhelming her as she picked up. “Mike! Where are you? I’m imagining all kinds of things! How long before you return home?”

“We need to talk. There’s something I have to tell you.” Mike sounded distant, as if they were strangers, not husband and wife. Not at all what she’d expected of him, today of all days.

“Can’t it wait until you’re home? Where are you? I talked to Steve. He told me you’ve not showed up at work since last week.” Louise’s mouth turned dry with fear.

“It’s over. I’m not returning to you. Don’t bother to try and change my mind. I’ll pick up my belongings later.” Mike’s voice was deathly cold.

It was as if they’d never known each other, much less shared a life.

Feeling faint, Louise whispered, “You’re kidding, right?”

“I’ve never been more serious than I am now,” Mike replied. “We’re through, Louise. Consider yourself dumped!”

The line went dead.

## WE NEVER SAID GOODBYE

As the room started to spin, Louise couldn't fathom what had happened. Tears streamed down her face and neck. *Mike's left me! What did I do to make him treat me like this? On our anniversary of all days!* Reeling from shock, she swallowed hard, the room suddenly closing in on her. Her stomach ached so much she thought she'd be sick. Forcing herself to get a grip, she staggered upstairs and threw herself on the bed, not bothering to take off her shoes. Curled up in a ball of nerves and clutching a pillow, all she could think of was how cold he'd been when he told her they were finished. "This can't be happening to me! It just can't!" she cried aloud.

It was almost dark outside by the time Louise reached for the mobile on the bedside table and dialled Trine's number. Perhaps her old friend was still at The Studio, finishing off some last minute alterations before next week's fashion shoot?

The phone rang for what seemed like an eternity before she heard the familiar voice at the other end.

"Mike's left me!" Louise blurted out. "I can't cope on my own . . . please . . ."

As her friend's voice dissolved into sobs, Trine knew something awful had taken place. "You're at home?" she said. "I'll be with you shortly, just sit tight!" A knot the size of a football formed inside Trine's chest. Mike was a complete bastard to spring this on Louise on their anniversary. The man her best friend married was a worthless shit! "It won't take long, an hour maximum. Hang in there, I'm on my way!" Trine decided immediately that Louise would stay with her. All she had to do was to ensure nothing untoward took place between now and arriving at the house in Barnes. "We'll pack a suitcase and get you out of there. You're staying with us for the foreseeable future, until we know what's going on."

## HÉLENE FERMONT

The following weeks passed by in a haze. Trine and Jasper took turns to watch over Louise. They'd persuaded her it was best that she stayed with them and Jasper convinced her he ought to pick up some of her belongings at the house. Neither Trine nor Louise had remembered to pack anything but a few pieces of clothing, a toothbrush and a pair of shoes. But ever since she arrived, Louise had confined herself to the guestroom and refused to get out of bed, except to shower.

Trine and Jasper had never seen her so distraught. Mike was a callous coward to end their marriage without warning over the phone! As much as they'd attempted to tempt her with food she normally liked, Louise barely touched it, causing her to lose at least a stone.

Watching her husband walk out the front door of their big and bustling home, Trine thought, *I hope Mike's not taken Louise's belongings, I'd not put it past him to stoop even lower than he already did!* If she ever saw him again, Trine would only be too pleased to wring his neck for all the pain and distress he'd subjected on her friend.

Her sentiment was confirmed when Jasper returned later that day, an angry expression in his normally kind blue eyes.

"You were right all along. Mike's picked up his things and helped himself to Louise's old paintings and furniture – the ones she inherited after her parents died! How will we tell her? It'll destroy her when she finds out."

Holding hands, the couple steered themselves to confront Louise with the news that Mike had already picked up his belongings. She looked so frail and upset, as if on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

Trine spoke first. She'd finished talking when to their surprise, Louise simply bowed her head, as if she'd already figured it out for herself.

## WE NEVER SAID GOODBYE

“I wish he was dead!” she cried. “At least then I’d be able to bury him and put what happened behind me.” Inwardly Louise wanted to cut him out of her life in the same way as he did with her. If only she knew the reason behind it! She’d spent a big part of her life with a man she loved and trusted. Yet all of it turned out to be a complete lie. Mike abandoned her without so much as an explanation, leaving her crushed to the core of her soul. All she could think of was how he sounded when he called that day. She repeated their conversation to herself so many times that all she wanted was to cry and sleep, wishing she could slip into oblivion and not wake up.

Later that week, Trine and Jasper’s teenage son, Zack, went upstairs to check if she was alright, having already tried in vain to persuade her to join them downstairs in the kitchen for dinner. By then she’d lost so much weight they feared for her health. At fifteen, Zack was very mature for his age and viewed Louise as part of the family. Hearing him shout, “I can’t wake her up!” Trine and Jasper ran upstairs and found Louise lying in bed, seemingly fast asleep. On the bedside table lay an empty bottle of sleeping pills neither of them recalled seeing before.

“Shit!” cried Trine. “She must have found it in the bathroom cabinet. I sometimes find it hard to sleep prior to a fashion show at The Studio . . . oh, why didn’t I hide it?” The bottle contained at least twenty tablets, all of which were gone.

Attempting to console Zack, Trine quickly put a robe over Louise’s cold body and prayed she wouldn’t die. Jasper called an ambulance and arranged for a neighbour to babysit the younger children.

As the ambulance men carried Louise out on a stretcher, one of them asked if something had happened to cause her to take an overdose of sleeping tablets.

---

HÉLENE FERMONT

“Her husband dumped her on their twentieth anniversary,” Trine replied, a desolate tear coursing down her cheek.

Nodding, the man said, “I see. Let’s get her to the A&E as quickly as we can.” It wasn’t the first time he’d had a similar response, and wouldn’t be the last. In his opinion the poor woman who lay unconscious in the ambulance was fortunate to be rid of someone as cruel as that. Looking at the three people who hovered over her, eyes glued to her face, he said, “She’s lucky to have you. Is there anyone you can think of who should be informed? Those tablets are lethal, although I believe she’ll survive.”

Jasper shook his head. “She has an aunt who lives abroad. But Louise was adamant she was not to be disturbed when she first came to stay. We’re here for her. We’re her family now.” He and Trine had tears in their eyes. If Zack hadn’t found her lying in bed, comatose, Louise would not have survived. Instead she was vomiting up tablets after the ambulance men had inserted a drip to make her sick.

An hour later they were standing in the corridor outside the room in hospital, when a young nurse walked up to them and asked a few routine questions. “Your friend will recover but there’s reason to believe she may do this again,” she told them. “You must keep sleeping pills and other medication out of her reach.”

“Please tell me the overdose didn’t cause serious harm?” Trine asked in a low voice, so as to not wake Louise up. Sleeping soundly in the hospital bed, her friend looked so peaceful, yet Trine knew they had a long road ahead of them before she was truly on the mend.

“Your friend’s fortunate in that your son found her when he did. She’s over the worst hurdle. It’s what happens next that matters more. I’m referring her to a therapist who specialises in trauma.”

## WE NEVER SAID GOODBYE

Almost a week passed before Louise willingly responded to questions. Her primary concern was the young boy who'd found her in the nick of time. Looking pale and exhausted, she leaned forward and touched Zack's arm.

"Are you alright? I'm desperately sorry you had to see me like that . . . there's a reason I did what I did, it won't happen again," she whispered, tears streaming down her face and onto the pillow.

"That's good to hear," Zack replied, squeezing her thin hand. "I'm glad you feel better." It seemed to him she'd lost even more weight after being on a drip since her admission to hospital.

The therapist, a middle-aged, bespectacled man, told them Louise was severely depressed yet not beyond repair. "Take one day at a time," he said. "Her entire world's been turned upside down. It will take a lot of patience and determination to get her back to how she used to be. Her entire emotional landscape has changed. You must make allowances for her as much as you can and permit her to vent her anger and grief on you. The time will come when you'll see that your friend's returned to you, albeit somewhat different." He prescribed antidepressants until Louise was capable of getting through the daily routine of getting up in the morning and caring for herself. "Some people take a long time to learn to cope," he explained. "Your friend may require counseling, although I suspect she's a lot stronger than she looks. Call me if you've cause for concern." Shaking their hands, he left the room.

Standing by the bed, Trine felt Louise's hand on hers.

"Please forgive me!" she cried, her eyes searching Trine's.

"There's nothing to forgive! Zack's fine. You must focus on getting better. It's the only thing that matters to us." Trine couldn't shake off the feeling of how hollow her words sounded. They had been to hell and back in less than a few weeks, yet Louise had survived against all the odds.

## HÉLENE FERMONT

A couple of days later, Louise was discharged and returned to live with the Larsen family. Lying in the same bed where Zack discovered her, she thought, *It's of no use to repeat what happened between me and Mike. If only I knew why he left me! I need answers, only then will I be able to get closure. He had no right to do what he did without so much as an explanation. I'm owed that at least.* She felt certain Mike had planned everything long before it actually took place. They had known each other far too long for her to let him walk away as if nothing happened.

The only sound coming from the living room was her friends' muffled voices, tinged with concern.

Deep down Louise knew without a doubt that the man she fell in love with wasn't the kind of person he'd led her and everyone else to believe. *The time will come when everything will be revealed,* she told herself, closing her mind to it for now.