



The Other Side of Us

By Sarah Mayberry

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The making of a good neighbor

The best thing between Oliver Barrett and Mackenzie Williams is a fence. Ever since Oliver's new-neighbor gestures were met with unfriendly responses, he's decided to keep his distance. After all, he's in this seaside town to get his life on track again. That doesn't include working hard to get on Mackenzie's good side—no matter how intriguing she may be.

His intentions are put to the test, however, when his dog becomes infatuated with hers. The two crafty canines do their best to break down the barriers between the properties. And where the dogs go...well, the humans must follow! It doesn't take long for a powerful attraction to build between Oliver and Mackenzie. They soon discover that the worst of first impressions can lead to the best possible outcomes....

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Sarah Mayberry was born in Melbourne, Australia. Ever since she learned to read and write she has wanted to be an author. She studied professional writing and literature before embarking on various writing-related jobs, working as a magazine editor and in various story-related roles on Australia's longest running serial drama, *Neighbours*. She inherited a love of romances from both her grandmothers and fulfilled her fondest wish when she was accepted for publication.

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It was wet and dark and cold. At first she didn't know where she was, then she realized she was in the car, the wipers working overtime, the road a shiny black ribbon stretching in front of her. She gripped the steering wheel tightly, but it felt rubbery and insubstantial beneath her hands. Panic welled inside her. She knew what was coming next. What always came next.

Then she saw it, the dark mass of rocks blocking the middle of the curving mountain road. Her scream was swallowed by the explosive crash of glass breaking and metal crushing as the car hit, then there was nothing but pain and the realization that she was going to die out here on this godforsaken stretch of road....

Mackenzie Williams bolted upright, heart racing, sweat cold and clammy on her body. The bedclothes were a heavy tangle around her legs and for a few disoriented seconds she fought to free herself before reality reasserted itself.

She was alive. She was at the beach house in Flinders. And she ached. God, how she ached. Her hips, her shoulder, her back...

She scrubbed her face with both hands, then let out her breath on an exhausted sigh. It had been almost two months since she'd had a nightmare and she'd hoped they were a thing of the past. No such luck, apparently.

She threw off the covers then swung her legs to the floor. Her joints and muscles protested the action, as they always did first thing in the morning or when she'd been sitting in the same position for too long. She gritted her teeth and pushed herself to her feet anyway. If she waited till the pain stopped, she'd never get anything done.

It was still dark outside and the floor was cool beneath her feet. She shuffled forward a few steps until she found her slippers, then reached for her dressing gown.

She could hear the skitter of Mr. Smith's claws in the hall outside her bedroom and she smiled as she opened the door.

"Hello, Smitty. How you doin'?" she asked as he began his morning happy dance, walking back and forth in front of her with his tail wagging madly, his body wiggling from side to side.

"I'm going to take that as a 'very well, thank you very much.' Shall we go outside?"

Mackenzie made her way to the living room. The bitter morning chill was like a slap in the face when she opened the French doors, but it didn't stop Mr. Smith from slipping past her and out into the gray dawn light. Mackenzie followed him, stopping at the top of the deck steps, arms wrapped around her torso as she looked

out over the jungle that was her yard.

The air was so frigid it hurt her nose. She inhaled great lungfuls of the stuff and let the last remnants of the nightmare fall away.

It was just a dream, after all. She wasn't dying. She was alive. She'd survived, against all odds. Better yet, she was on the track to a full recovery and resumption of her former life.

Which reminded her.

She left the door open for Mr. Smith before collecting her iPad from where it was charging on the kitchen counter. One click told her that Gordon hadn't responded to her email. Again.

This was getting ridiculous. Twelve months ago, her boss wouldn't have ignored an email from her. Then, she'd been a valuable commodity, the only producer in ten years who had managed to improve the ratings for the production company's longest-running serial drama, *Time and Again*. Now apparently she was a liability, an employee on long-term sick leave who didn't even merit the thirty seconds of his time it would take to respond to her email.

He doesn't think I'm coming back.

The thought made her blood run cold. She had worked hard to land the job of producer on a network drama. She'd kissed ass and gone beyond the call of duty and even trampled on a few people in her rush to climb the ladder. She'd sacrificed her time, her social life, her marriage...and then her car had hit a landslide at sixty kilometers an hour and flipped down the side of a mountain. She'd fractured her skull, broken her pelvis, her hip, her leg, several ribs as well as her arm, torn her liver and lost her spleen.

And it looked as though she was going to lose her job, too, even though she'd been driving to a location shoot when the accident happened. Gordon had promised that they'd keep her job open for her, filling the role with a short-term replacement. He'd given her a year to recover—a year that was almost up. And yet he wasn't returning her calls.

Lips pressed into a tight line, she opened a blank email and typed a quick message to Gordon's secretary, Linda. Linda owed her, and Mackenzie knew that if she asked, the other woman would make sure Gordon called her.

At least, she hoped she still had that much influence.

Mr. Smith pressed against her legs, his small body a welcome weight. She bent to run a hand over his salt-and-pepper fur.

"I'm not giving up, Smitty. Not in a million freaking years."

She wouldn't let Gordon write her off. She would walk back into her job, and she would claw her way into her old life. There was no other option on the table. She refused for there to be.

She had a hot shower, then dressed in her workout clothes. Together she and Mr. Smith made their way to the large room at the front of the house she'd converted to hold her Pilates reformer and other gym equipment when she left the rehab hospital three months ago. She sat on the recumbent bike and started pedaling. Smitty reacquainted himself with the rawhide bone he'd left there yesterday and settled in for the duration.

After ten minutes on the bike, she lowered herself to the yoga mat and began her stretches. As always, her body protested as she attempted to push it close to a normal range of movement. Her physiotherapist, Alan, had warned her that she might never get full range in her left shoulder and her right hip. She'd told him he was wrong and was determined to prove it.

The usual mantra echoed in her mind as she stretched her bowstring-tight hip flexors.

I want my life back. I want my job back. I want my apartment and my shoes and my clothes. I want to have cocktails with my friends and the challenge of juggling too much in too little time. I want to be me again.

Gritting her teeth, she held the stretch. Sweat broke out along her forehead and upper lip. She started to pant, but she held the stretch. Her hips were burning, her back starting to protest.

She held the stretch.

Only when pain started shooting up her spine did she ease off and collapse onto the mat, sweat running down her temple and into her hair.

Better than yesterday. Definitely better.

The thought was enough to rouse her to another round. Teeth bared in a grimace, she eased into another pose.

The morning sun was rising over the treetops as Oliver turned onto the unmarked gravel road that he hoped like hell was Seaswept Avenue. He was tired and sleep deprived after a long drive from Sydney and more than ready for this journey to be over.

Craning forward over the steering wheel, he checked house numbers as he drove slowly up the rutted road. Not that there were many houses to check. The lots were large, the houses either old and charming or new and sharp edged, and there was plenty of space in between. Aunt Marion's was number thirty-three, and he drove past half-a-dozen vacant lots thick with bush before spotting a tired-looking clapboard house sitting cheek by jowl with a much tidier, smarter whitewashed cottage. As far as he could tell, they were the only two houses at this end of the street.

He didn't have enough optimism left to hope the tidy cottage was number thirty-three, and the rusty numbers on the letterbox of the shabbier house confirmed his guess.

It seemed like the perfect ending to a road trip that had featured not one but two flat tires and a motel with fleas in the carpet.

Driving from Sydney to Melbourne had seemed like a great idea four days ago. Four days ago, he'd been so sick of the burning anger that seemed to have taken up permanent residence in his gut that he'd been willing to do almost anything to change the record in his mind.

How could she do this to me? How could I be so freakin' stupid? How could she do this to me?

He pulled into the driveway and let his head drop against the seat for a few seconds. God, he was tired. Strudel made a forlorn sound from the backseat and Oliver shook himself awake and exited the car to let her out. She immediately availed herself of the nearest patch of grass. Would that he could be so lucky, since he'd cleverly tossed the keys to his aunt's house into the bottom of his duffel bag. But he wasn't about to start his stay in what was surely a close-knit community by exposing himself to his new neighbor.

Stretching his arms over his head, Oliver grabbed his duffel from the rear. Strudel joined him on the weathered porch as he dug in among his clothes for the key. Miracle of miracles, his hand closed over it on the second dip. Moments later he was inside, walking around flicking on lights and opening windows to relieve the stuffy, musty smell. He passed quickly through the living room filled with heavy, old-fashioned furniture, and the two bedrooms with their stripped-bare beds, ending his tour in the kitchen.

Aunt Marion had died over a year ago now, but neither he nor his brother, Brent, had been in a position to do anything about their joint inheritance until now. Traveling south to put things in order had seemed like the perfect excuse to be out of Sydney so he could lick his wounds and get his head together.

If that was even possible.

Of course it's possible. Edie was your wife, not your whole life.

Logically, he knew it was true, but it didn't feel true at the moment. Six years of his life had been exposed as a lie. His whole marriage. He didn't know how to deal with the anger and grief and humiliation he felt.

Strudel whined, drawing his attention to where she was sniffing and scratching around the base of the oven. N...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jack Lau:

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important work, like looking for your favorite publication and reading a reserve. Beside you can solve your condition; you can add your knowledge by the publication entitled *The Other Side of Us*. Try to face the book *The Other Side of Us* as your buddy. It means that it can being your friend when you sense alone and beside associated with course make you smarter than ever. Yeah, it is very fortunated for you personally. The book makes you considerably more confidence because you can know almost everything by the book. So , we should make new experience in addition to knowledge with this book.

Bennett Fox:

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