

# AND THEN I MET YOU by Mackenzie Lee

## EXCERPT

“Have you heard from Mike for your birthday?” asked my friend Angie.

It was late October of 2018, a full month after my birthday. We were sitting at Willie’s Steak House at the time, having a belated celebratory dinner.

“No, I haven’t...and it’s been too long. Even for him.”

Mike and I always managed a phone conversation on or near our birthdays, no matter how far apart we might be, geographically speaking. He wasn’t usually able to call me on my actual birthday or his, but he always snuck in under the wire and called me sometime in my birthday month (and his).

Close enough. As long as he got the month right, that was good enough for me. After all, we were separated by many miles now, with me being up north and him down south.

Circumstances were such that I couldn’t call and had to wait for him to call me. First, July—Mike’s birthday month—came and went and I didn’t hear from him. When September—my birthday month—rolled around, and I still hadn’t heard from him, I felt a little uneasy. But I hadn’t paid any attention to the vague emptiness I felt until I heard Angie’s question.

“What’s his full name?” she asked, pulling out her phone and going onto Google. “Oh, no, is that him?”

I looked at her phone and saw the website of a funeral home. “Oh, dear God. It can’t be him...but it is.” All I could think was, Oh, Mike, don’t let me down.

Don’t let me down...I’m in love for the first time, Don’t you know it’s gonna last, It’s a love that lasts forever, It’s a love that had no past... (The Beatles)

“...He died peacefully at his home,” read the death announcement. Mike had died on May 18th, 2018, five months earlier. Photos of him, along with words that had been written about his passing, stared back at me.