

DEAR READER,

*Where can we escape when we lose someone we love?*

That was the question I asked myself when I sat down to write this book. *When Haru Was Here* was a difficult story to unravel. Maybe because so many pieces of it were personal to me. I wanted to explore the lengths our mind goes through to overcome enormous grief. What stories do we tell ourselves? What do we choose to remember or forget?

After the death of his best friend, Eric wakes up to an alternate world where everything seems okay again. When the boy he met last summer reappears in his life, he's given another chance at finding love. But the only thing is, no one else can see him.

Those three sentences were all I had when I started drafting this book. I didn't know anything else except this: these two could never be together. There was something lonely about the idea, but also deeply relatable. It made me think about the imaginary experiences we have every day. The ones we often keep to ourselves. *When Haru Was Here* is a story about the many complexities of grief. It is also a story about unrequited love and second chances. It is a story I didn't know I needed to write until I reached the very end. I hope it gives a new perspective on what it means to move forward.

Thank you for reading.



DUSTIN THAO



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