

Love's Second Chance

Chapter 4

Jonathan parked outside the restaurant that couples frequented.

The two were about to exit the car and enter the restaurant. That was when Zara took out the phone, which had been inside her pocket the entire time, and handed it to Jonathan. "I brought your phone out for you."

Jonathan hummed in acknowledgment, then instinctively glanced down at it. A few seconds later, silence filled the space around them.

Zara's heart sank deeper into her chest. "What's wrong?"

Jonathan put away his phone and spoke impassively. "Something came up at the company. I don't think I can join you for this meal. You'll have to eat alone. I'll go with you next time, okay?"

That sank Zara's heart into the pit of her stomach. Her lips tugged as she questioned, "Is it that important? Can't you go another time?"

"Yeah, it is." Jonathan probably felt guilty because he leaned in to kiss her cheek. "I'll go with you next time, Zar."

After saying that, he drove off.

Zara watched him leave, her heart sinking deeper until it vanished entirely. As expected, she saw several new posts on Harper's Instagram that afternoon.

Harper's nine latest posts were pictures of delicious food and her trip to the amusement park. One of the pictures showed a man's hand, which Harper had deliberately posted.

Nobody knew that hand better than Zara. That hand caressed her face, hugged her tight, and held her hand numerous times.

That hand in the picture kept reminding Zara that her boyfriend of eight years had turned down their date to accompany another girl to the amusement park.

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Zara sat in her quiet bedroom. She shut her eyes, thinking that perhaps she and Jonathan should have a proper chat this time. She waited until the sky darkened, but Jonathan never came home.

Instead, Zara received a call from Jonathan's friend, Cole Hoffman.

"Zara, Jonathan's at the race track and is racing against someone with his life on the line. Please hurry over and convince him not to do it!" Cole sounded beyond anxious.

A frown marred Zara's face as she headed out.

Jonathan used to participate in racing. However, he promised to cherish his life and stop racing after they started dating.

Zara rushed to the race track at lightning speed but was too late. Jonathan had already driven onto the track.

A group of people gathered around the spectating area. Even a teary-faced Harper stood aside and watched.

Zara grabbed the arm of one of the men. "What's going on? Why is he suddenly racing?"

Cole met Zara's eyes but was hesitant to speak.

Harper's choked-up voice then rang out. "It's my fault. I insisted on watching a race, so Jonathan brought me here. We bumped into a guy, who tried to ask me out, but Jonathan said no. So, they started arguing..."

The pieces finally clicked in place for Zara. She figured out that Jonathan didn't want another man to steal Harper. Because of that, Jonathan forsook his past promise to her about never racing again.

Zara glanced at the familiar car on the track and heard its recognizable roaring engine. All at once, it was like she had been time-traveled back to eight years ago.

Back then, this was the place where Zara opened her heart to Jonathan and agreed to date him.

He brought her to this race track, boldly raised his chin at her, and made a bet. He declared, "Zara, you'll agree to be my girlfriend if I win two rounds against my opponent in this race."

Zara accepted that term, thinking Jonathan couldn't win.

To her surprise, Jonathan acted like he couldn't care less about his life during the race. He won in the end. That said, he drove so quickly that his car flipped over, and he suffered severe injuries.

Jonathan nearly lost his life that day. At the time, he lay on the hospital bed with a full body of injuries, yet he held Zara's hand tightly. "I won. You're now my girlfriend."

He was willing to risk his life for her.

Zara felt an indescribable sensation. Yet, deep down, she believed that Jonathan might be the man for her in this lifetime.

She didn't believe in love and would only dare to share her sincere affection with someone if they showed her their utmost love. It just so happened that Jonathan was the man who could risk his life to be with her.

The Zara from before would never think that Jonathan would risk his life for someone else in the future.

"Do you have a death wish, Jonathan? Why are you accelerating at a time like this?" Cole bellowed from nearby.

His shouts pulled Zara out of her daze. She looked up and noticed Jonathan's car had crossed the finish line without slowing down. Then, it crashed into the iron wall that fenced the area in.

A thunderous boom filled the air as Jonathan's car flipped several feet away.

Harper was so scared that she shrieked.

In that instant, Zara could almost picture the scene of the injured Jonathan eight years ago.

Later, Jonathan was already unconscious when he was sent to the hospital. His left leg had a severe wound, and his blood had stained one side of Zara's body.

Zara watched him get wheeled into the emergency room.

Two hours later, Jonathan's life was finally out of danger. He got wheeled into a patient's ward, where Zara stayed by his side all night. It was unclear when he would wake up.

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The next day, Cole visited and couldn't bear it when he saw the haggard Zara in bloodstained clothes. She had always been an elegant beauty in their eyes. They had never seen her in such a trainwrecked state before.

"Please get some rest and go wash up, Zara," said one of them.

The blood on Zara's body had dried. So, Zara nodded, got up, and left the ward.

She didn't get any rest. Instead, she borrowed clean clothes from a nurse, showered, and was about to return to the ward. Yet, she had just arrived outside when she heard Cole's frustrated voice.

He asked, "What on earth was wrong with you yesterday? Why would you risk your life for Harper? Don't play me for a fool, Jonathan! Tell me the truth—how do you actually feel about Harper?"

Zara gripped the door handle. However, she didn't hear a response from Jonathan, who was also inside the ward.

Following that, Cole spoke again. "Don't you love Zara to death? What the hell are you playing at now?"

This time, Jonathan responded. His voice was still a little weak and hoarse, yet his every word brutally plunged into Zara's chest like a knife. "It's been eight years. I'm over her."

Every muscle in Zara's body stiffened. She could no longer hear what the men chatted about in the ward afterward. Her head spun because of the phrase, "It's been eight years. I'm over her."

She thought, "I could kick the door down and demand an explanation from Jonathan. Or, I could barge in, crying and kicking up a fuss in the ward.

"But those are reactions my 20-year-old self would make, not the current 28-year-old me. Maybe that's why Jonathan has grown tired of me..."

Zara fought hard to maintain her composure. She did so, even though her heart had shattered and her entire body felt like it would collapse upon any impact. She turned on her heel to leave the hospital and go home alone.

She excused Jonathan's behavior many times, interpreting his sudden indifference as a "cool down" period after his passionate pursuit of her. Plus, she even convinced herself that Jonathan's special treatment toward Harper was because he cared for her as an older brother.

Today, she finally saw through those idealistic facades. She accepted that Jonathan was someone who loved the thrill of the chase. His love wasn't dull—it had just transferred from Zara to Harper.

Since he no longer found it thrilling to date Zara, he gave his love to someone more refreshing.

"Jonathan's over it, huh? So, that's why he's grown colder toward me with time. It's also his reason for not wanting to get married and why he fell in love with someone else.

"He did everything in his ability to win me over back then. Yet, after eight years together, he's grown tired and is over me.

"He said he loved me first, but he's also the first to say he no longer loves me..." Zara thought. Then, she scoffed at herself, thinking, "You got played by him for eight years, Zara! How ridiculous!

Zara did nothing after getting home except pack all her things into suitcases. She had lived here for eight years, so she needed several suitcases for all her belongings. That was why she didn't take anything with her.

She sealed all her suitcases into big cardboard boxes. After that, she threw them out like she was dumping her pathetic memories of these past eight years.

Her heart ached tremendously. Yet, she refused to lie to herself about things being fine anymore, even if she had to endure a hellish fate.

In the end, her gaze swept past the home, which no longer had any traces of her. Only then did she take out her phone and text Jonathan. She left her keys behind before shutting the doors entirely.

It was still raining outside, and the sky seemed hazy.

Zara didn't have an umbrella. She didn't hail a taxi, much less have a destination in mind.

She stayed outside until a car stopped in front of her.