

# A second Chance

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*Ever wish you could have a second chance with your first love?*

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It was a beautiful Midwest fall day. The sky was a deep blue, a deeper blue than usual. There was a chill in the air, a hint of the coming winter. The fall leaves were brilliant with their reds and oranges. Once upon a time, it used to be my favorite time of the year, but that had come to a crashing halt long ago. I unlocked the door to my apartment and went inside, tired from a long week at work. I didn't mind the job I had, but it had lost the glow of enjoyment a long time before. Shit, my whole life had lost that glow a long time ago. I was 40 years old, divorced, paying a mortgage on a house that my ex-wife lived in with her flavor of the week, and up to my ears in debt thanks to her and her habit of spending a shitload on toys for them before I found out about her whoring around. I felt like the American Dream had whipped out its dick and pissed all over me. The only good thing about it was that we had no children that would have gotten hurt. I grabbed a beer from the refrigerator and headed to the bathroom for a shower. Before I could get there though, the phone rang. Looking at the display, I saw it was my brother Bill. "Hey Bill, what's going on?" "Hi, Paul, listen, I have some mail here from our high school. It seems they're having a reunion this summer. It's an all-class reunion. I'm going to go. The letter they sent is asking if I would ask you if you are coming," my brother said. I laughed. My opinion of class reunions is pretty low. To me, all they are is a bunch of fortunate people sitting around bragging about their job, their kids, their big houses and fancy cars, and rubbing that shit into the not-so-fortunate ones' noses. Bill, two years younger than me, was one of the fortunate ones. He was the star quarterback, and the success of taking our team to the State Championship and getting a scholarship to the University of Florida was only the beginning. Leading the Florida Gators to the National Championship added to it. The only thing that stopped him from being probably the best quarterback in the NFL was the career-ending injury to his knee in his first preseason game. His business was thriving even during this economic downturn; he had married his high school sweetheart who had given him two perfect children who were going to college. He and his family lived in a large house in a gated community and had all the toys. While the American Dream pissed all over me, Bill got ice cream and rainbows from it. If I sound envious, you're right. Once upon a time I had what he had, but that was gone now. Except for the bills, that is. "Billy, you do what you want. I'm not going, period. I've got better things to do than listening to you and all the other jocks and pretty people reminiscing about the old days, bragging about whose got the better BMW and bigger house.

Fuck that shit.” “Paul, don’t be an ass. I didn’t make myself clear. There was another letter enclosed from Jaime Miller. She was the one asking if you would come.” Fuck. My asshole of a brother would have to play the one card that would make me say yes: Jaime Miller. Jaime Miller was the homecoming queen, a cheerleader, and for three years, the love of my life. Until she broke up with me the summer before we went to college, saying she didn’t want to try to make a long distance relationship work. Twenty two years later, I still held a torch for her. Anybody out there who still doesn’t have a thing for their first love is either lying to themselves or dead. My brother went on. “She wanted to know if you’re on Facebook, and if you were married or not. Do you want me to tell her what’s happening in your life?” “No, I’m not going to let her get her information second-hand. Look, Bill, give me the address and let me think about this, all right?” I said. Bill gave me her address, and said good bye. I hung up, sat in my easy chair and drank my beer. I ended up drinking the better part of a case and passed out. I woke up the next morning, stiff and sore from sleeping in the easy chair and very hung over. After the shower I was going to get last night before Bill laid the mental cheap shot on me and a breakfast of aspirin and coffee, I almost felt human. I booted up my computer and paid some bills. After I had finished that, I thought Oh what the hell, and went to Facebook. I entered the information and started an account. When I came to the area to add friends, I entered Jaime’s name. After sifting through ten pages of Jaime Millers, I finally found her. I clicked on her name and looked at her photo for a while. Time had been good to her; Jaime’s face still looked the same as I remembered it. Her brown eyes were bright and clear. Her long dark hair was in a shorter cut now, but it looked great. With fear grabbing my stomach in a death grip, I clicked on the information tab. The page said the usual thing about only sharing some information with everybody and only gave her birthday. Fuck . With a shaking hand, I clicked the Add as a Friend button. The friend request sent pop-up came up, and I logged off. Later that afternoon after running errands and sending the mortgage payment, I logged into Facebook. There was a notification and a message. I clicked the notification and it said that Jaime accepted me as a friend. Then I clicked the new message. It was from Jaime. It read: Hello, Paul. It’s nice to have found you after all this time. Call me; my number is on my information page. Jaime I went to her information page. I looked at her marital status; it said single . I don’t believe it. Nothing good has happened for me in a long time, I thought. I found her phone number, grabbed the phone and dialed her number. I let it ring twice, and then hung up . What the hell am I doing? What do I say? ‘Hi, Jamie, It’s Paul. Remember me? You broke my heart over twenty years ago and I’m still not completely over you?’ I must be a god damned idiot, I thought. “Fuck!!!” I said. The phone rang. I looked at the display; it was Jaime. My mouth went bone dry. I picked up the phone. “Hello?” “Paul?” My heart skipped a beat when I heard her voice; it still sounded sweeter than honey. “Hi, Jaime.” “Paul, it’s so good to hear your voice.” Same here, Jaime, how are you doing?” “Paul, I’m doing well. How are you? “To be honest, Jaime, I’m not doing well.” “I know, Paul. Billy told me what happened. I’m sorry. You didn’t deserve what happened to you.” “I’m going to punch my brother in the mouth for being a rat. I told him yesterday not to tell you.” I heard Jaime laugh. Then she said, “Oh Paul, don’t you dare!! He told me three weeks ago when he found me on Facebook. I guess it took him until yesterday to come up with a way to get you to get on Facebook.”

Damn Bill to hell, that sneaky bastard . Jaime continued, “Paul, don’t be mad at Bill. He worries about you. He cares about you, like family should, Paul. Yes, I know what you’re thinking. You’re thinking, Bill should mind his own business, and I agree. He should mind his own business. But his business is that his brother is hurting and has been for a long time. He knows you won’t talk to a stranger about it, or him. “Paul, he knows you need a friend, someone to talk to. I know, what he did was sneaky and devious. If I were you, I’d be mad at him too. But he knows you’re too proud to get help. So, he brought you help, Paul, that’s all.” Jaime was right. I was too proud, and too embarrassed. So, I did the only thing I knew how to do; I emotionally closed everybody out. Problem is the emotions will eat at you. And right now, I’m eating myself alive, I thought, and then I said, “Jaime, why are you always right?” With a laugh, Jaime said, “Because once upon a time, I knew you better than you knew yourself. And even after twenty years, I still know you better than you know yourself.” Damn it. She was right, again. I sat in my easy chair, and asked the one question that had been on my mind for twenty two years. “Jaime, what happened between us? Why did you walk away?” There was silence from the phone. After a minute she answered in a shaky voice, “Paul, I was afraid of losing you. So, I thought it would be better if I walked away rather than you walking away from me. It was the hardest thing I’ve ever done. It was also the dumbest thing I’ve ever done. You don’t know how many times I’ve regretted what I did that day. Paul, I know I have no right to ask this, but.....do you forgive me?” As I sat there, I felt a tear on my face. I had not cried in nearly thirty years since the day my father died. But now, here I was crying like a child. Finally when I could speak, I said softly, “Babe, there’s nothing I couldn’t forgive you for. I can’t lie, it hurt like hell. But it doesn’t matter. I loved you then, and I still do. I never stopped loving you, Jaime. ” I heard Jaime weeping. Then I heard her say, “Paul, sweet, sweet Paul. I’ve done so many things to try to forget you, a lot of terrible things. So many mistakes I’ve made to try to forget about the biggest mistake I’ve ever made. But I couldn’t forget. I couldn’t forget you. I couldn’t forget that I love you. I couldn’t stop loving you. Paul, I still love you too.” For the first time in a long time, I felt happy. I said, “Jaime, what do we do now? I mean, I want to be with you, wherever that may be, here or where you are, it doesn’t matter. There’s nothing holding me here; I can do my job wherever. I could move with a week’s notice; I don’t even have a lease to contend with.” Jamie laughed again. I couldn’t get enough of that. Then she said, “Paul, there is something I need to tell you, something I should have told you a long time ago. When we broke up, I was pregnant. I did not know it at the time. Our daughter is twenty two years old. She knows you are her father. Cristina graduates from the University in two weeks at Fall Commencement, and really wants her father to watch her get her degree. Will you be there, Paul? She really wants to meet you. I’m so sorry about not telling you sooner, babe.” “Darling, like I said, there’s nothing I can’t forgive you for. And, yes I will go to our daughter’s graduation. I only live an hour away from the University. I can’t promise much for a graduation present though. Seems my ex-wife and her lawyer have my wallet in a wringer. Are you going?” Jaime said, “I wouldn’t miss Cristina’s graduation for anything. But I live in Fargo. And don’t worry about a present; meeting her father is present enough, babe.” “So you can stay here with me, Jaime. It isn’t much, but it’s what I’ve got.” “All right, but I don’t want to put you out, Paul. I don’t want to impose.” “Jaime, it’s not an imposition. Everything I have is yours. You’ve had my

heart for over twenty five years.” “Okay, now it’s your turn to be right. I accept.” Jaime and I talked on the phone for another hour, and we hung up. We talked all day Sunday. We shared everything that happened in the past twenty years with each other. That night as I slept, I dreamed about the night that my heart was broken twenty two years before. I had picked up Jaime to take her with a movie. Usually, she was happy, but tonight, she was distant. Finally, just before I dropped her off at her house, she turned to me and said, “Paul, in two weeks we both leave for college. I’m going to be a thousand miles away from you. I don’t think what we have will survive the distance. “Paul, I’m so sorry, but it’s over between us.” She got out of the car and walked away. I was stunned. I did not have an idea that this was coming. I awoke with a start and sat at the edge of my bed with my head in my hands crying until the sun came up. We talked on the phone every day for hours, from when we got up until we had to go to work, then after we got home until we went to bed. The Thursday before Cristina’s graduation, Jaime said, “I’m leaving in the morning to drive down there, baby. Are you sure about this?” I replied, “Jaime, I’ve never been more ready for anything in my life. I’m taking tomorrow off just for you. I’ll be here waiting. I love you, Jaime Miller.” “I love you too, Paul Thomas. I’ll call you before I head out. Goodnight, my love.” The next morning, I woke up early, having not slept much the night before. I was so nervous I was shaking. My mind was playing the what if game at full tilt. What if she can’t stand the way I look? What if she doesn’t like my apartment? Finally, I said out loud, “Fuck!! It’s been twenty years. Of course I’m not the same person; yeah, I’ve gained a little weight and my hairline has receded. It’s not like Jaime is still a cheerleader anymore and she’s older as well. Just KNOCK THIS SHIT OFF!!!” Finally at seven a. m., the phone rang. The display said Jaime. “Good morning princess!! Are you ready for your trip?” “Good morning Paul!! I just got the car loaded up and was just about to leave, honey. I’m looking forward to seeing you. I’m so nervous, I didn’t sleep so well.” With a laugh, I said, “Neither did I, Jaime. I’m so nervous, I’m shaking. But I feel a lot better now that I’ve talked to you. Please be careful driving and take your time, okay? I’ll be waiting for you. I love you, Jaime.” “I love you too, Paul. I’ll see you in a while.” I quickly cleaned the house, then showered and ran some errands. I was finished with them and home with an hour to spare. The phone rang; it was Jamie. “Hi, babe. I just got off the interstate and I’ll be there in fifteen minutes. I can’t wait to see you, darling.” “I’m ready and waiting for you. I have to warn you though, I don’t have much and this apartment isn’t the greatest. I just don’t want to disappoint you, Jaime.” “Paul, listen to me. Where you live or what you have doesn’t matter. I’m coming to see you, not your house or what you have. I love you, no matter what you have. I’ve loved you for over twenty five years.” “Okay, Jaime. I love you too. I’ll see you in a few minutes.” I hung up the phone and then walked outside to my car. I reached inside and grabbed something I forgot to bring in earlier. I heard a honking of a car horn. I looked up and saw a red Cadillac CTS pull in behind my ten year old Mustang. Jaime was behind the wheel. I straightened up and smiled. Jaime got out. She was wearing a black leather jacket, white polo shirt and blue jeans and looked even better than I remembered. I leaned against my car and said, “Hi, sweet angel, time was very kind to you.” I opened my arms and she ran into them. Jaime laid her head on my shoulder and whispered as she cried, “I’m so sorry, baby.” We stood in the middle of the parking lot just holding each other and crying. The October wind started to blow and she shivered. I

took her hand and we walked inside. I stopped her at the foot of the stairs and said, "No more tears, Jaime. The past is behind us, we only have now and the future to look forward to." Jaime smiled and said as she moved closer to me, "I know. And right now, I need to do this." Her lips touched mine softly and her arms went around me. I held her face in my hands as we kissed. Finally, Jaime smiled at me and said, "That was better than I ever remembered." I smiled and said, "Yes it was." I led us up the stairs and down the hall to my apartment. I opened the door for us and she went inside. I closed the door, took her jacket and hung it up and said, "Welcome to my home, darlin'. Like I said, it isn't much but it's mine. Well, it's ours." Jamie looked around, hugged me and said, "Paul, it wouldn't matter if it was a mansion or the back of a van, you're here so it's perfect. I love you, Paul." Just then, my phone started to ring. The display on it said it was Doug, my boss. Doug was an insufferable prick half my age, whose only reason for holding his job was because his father owned the company. I growled in frustration and Jaime giggled as I answered it. "Doug, I realize that calling me on my day off means that this is important, but your timing sucks." From the phone I heard Doug laugh and say, "Paul, this is important. Dad just fired the head of the Fargo office because of the poor performance in the office. He asked me if I knew anybody who could turn them around, and I told him you could. So I'm offering you the job as the Fargo branch manager." Cockily, I replied, "Is this offer coming from you or is Steve making this offer?" "Paul, why are you busting my balls over this?" "Because I can," I said as I hung up the phone. Jaime, having only heard my side of the conversation, looked at me with ever widening eyes and said, "What was that all about?" With a smile I said, "Just wait for it, babe. You'll see." The phone rang again. This time it was Steve, the head of the company. I held a finger to my mouth, indicating to Jaime to listen quietly, and then hit the speakerphone button. The first thing we heard was Steve's deep chuckle. I said, "Hi, Steve, I've been expecting your call." Steve's chuckle turned into a full-blown laugh. Then he said, "Paul, Doug just threw the phone across his office. It's the best thing I've seen all week. But seriously, Paul, I need you to take over the Fargo office. In the past two years since Jeff took it over, he's just about ran it into the ground. I know what you're going to say, that I shouldn't have hired my other son for that job, and you're right. So I fired him fifteen minutes ago. I know I will catch hell from my wife when I get home, but it needed to be done. And Doug's just about on the way to the unemployment line as well, only he doesn't know it yet. He tried to talk me into giving him the job, but I know better now. So, Paul, what do you say? Whatever you want, you get." Jaime couldn't hold her silence anymore. She waved me to silence and said, "Hi Steve, this is Jaime, Paul's attorney," I raised my eyebrows in surprise. She continued, "Okay, here's the deal. Double his salary, plus a thousand dollars a month for housing allowance, plus all his benefits paid for by the company. Oh, and you'll pay all moving expenses. That's it. We have three other companies wanting his services, so we need a decision as soon as possible." There was silence for a second, and then we heard Steve laugh. "Jaime, it's a bargain at twice the price. I accept. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to fire my other son for destruction of company property." "Congratulations, Steve, you have a new branch manager. My client will report to your Fargo office in two weeks." She broke the connection as I stood there in shock. Finally when I found the wits to speak I said, "Remind me never to play poker with you, babe." Jaime smiled and said, "All in a day's

work for me, sweetheart. Congratulations on your promotion. Now, come here so I can collect my fee." I kissed her tenderly. Just then her cell phone started to ring. Now Jaime growled in frustration. She answered her phone, then handed it to me, whispering in my ear, "I think you'll want to take this call, baby." I took the phone and said, "Hello?" I heard a woman's voice from the phone saying, "Hello, Dad. This is Cristina. It's so nice to talk to you finally." I could feel my eyes fill with tears as I said, "It's nice to finally talk to you too. We have a lot to catch up on, don't we? Would you mind coming here for dinner his evening?" "I will, Dad. Just give me directions and I'll be there at seven, if that's fine." "Anytime is fine, Cristina. I love you, kid." "I love you too, Dad. I'll see you and Mom tonight." I handed Jaime her phone back and sat on the couch. Jaime sat next to me, took my hands in hers and said, "Paul, I've made so many mistakes in the past twenty two years, but leaving you and not telling you about Cristina are the biggest mistakes I've ever made. I cannot even begin to say how sorry I am to you and to Cristina." "Jaime, like I said, the past is the past. All we can change is now and work with the future. I love you, so there's nothing I couldn't forgive you for." I pulled Jaime into my lap and held her like a child. Her arms went around my neck and she rested her head in the crook of my neck. In less than thirty seconds she was asleep. I carried her to the bedroom and laid her on the bed. She whimpered, "Stay with me, Paul, please?" I replied softly, "I will Jaime. Just need to lock the door." After I locked the door, I returned to the bedroom. Jaime was asleep again. I slipped off her shoes, and then set the alarm for six. I crawled into bed next to the woman I loved, and she snuggled against me with her head on my chest. I whispered to her before I fell asleep, "I'll love you until the end of time, Jaime." The next thing I remember is the alarm clock beeping. I awoke and looked at Jaime, who had raised her head and was looking at me with a smile. "Hi, Paul. I really wasn't dreaming, wasn't I? You're here." "And I'll always be here, Jaime." I kissed her, shut off the alarm and said, "Our daughter will be here in an hour. I kind of figured you might want to freshen up before she gets here, so I set the alarm to give you time." "Thank you, sweetheart." I went and retrieved her things from her car. I came back and Jaime was on the phone giving Cristina directions. I asked Jaime if she wanted anything to drink, made her a Jack and Coke, and grabbed a beer for me. She smiled her thanks and mouthed, "Fifteen minutes," and pointed at the phone. I nodded my head, understanding that Cristina was fifteen minutes away. I changed my shirt and brushed my teeth. There was a knock at the door. By this time, Jaime was in the bathroom, so I answered the door. Standing in my doorway was a reincarnation of Jaime from that day twenty two years ago. I swallowed the lump in my throat and whispered, "Oh my god, Cristina?" With a shaky voice, my daughter said, "Hi, Daddy, I'm Cristina." Crying, she came into my arms and squeezed me tight. Crying as well, I held her close and stroked her hair gently. My life is now complete, I thought. Jaime joined us as we stood together, a family reunited. Finally, Cristina said, "Oh no, I've made a mess of your shirt, Dad. I'm sorry." "It's all right, sweetie. I've got more." Cristina and Jaime sat on the couch while I poured Cristina a glass of wine, refreshed Jaime's drink, and got myself a fresh beer. Joining them on the couch, I said, "I propose a toast; to family." We went to dinner and talked about everything in our lives. When Cristina mentioned that she was unsure what to do for work because it would be a year before she was going to graduate school, I said, "Don't worry. As the new manager

of my company's Fargo branch, I'll get you a job, even if I have to pay your salary from my own pocket. Although, I think your mother would be able to talk Steve into basically anything, after this morning's little conversation." Cristina said softly, "Thank you Dad. I love you." "I love you too, Cristina." After Cristina left to go back to her apartment, Jaime and I were standing in the living room of my (now our) apartment. Jaime said, "So, Paul, our daughter is beautiful isn't she?" "Yes, Jaime she is. You did an excellent job raising her, babe." Jamie said, "Paul, I'm sorry I didn't tell you." I interrupted her with a kiss and said, "It's the past. Let's leave it there, okay?" With a smile, Jamie nodded her head. Taking her hand, I said, "Come on, Jaime. We've a lot of time to make up for." I led her to the bedroom. When I looked into Jaime's eyes, I could see fear. "What's wrong, babe?" Jaime said softly, "I don't want to disappoint you, Paul." I kissed her and said, "Jaime Miller, look at me. We are a lot older now. I can accept that. I've loved you for over half my lifetime. You won't disappoint me, babe." Jaime's eyes softened and she said, "Okay. I love you, Paul. Just remember that." She came to me, grabbed the front of my shirt and ripped it open. The buttons flew across the room. With a smile, I said, "And you were worried about disappointing me?" She laughed and said, "Not anymore, Paul. Now hush up and get yourself ready to make love to me." She nibbled on my neck. I shivered and she whispered, "You like?" "Oh god, yes." I began to unbutton her blouse and nuzzled her earlobe. Jaime giggled and said, "I love you, Paul." I slipped her blouse from Jaime's shoulders, it fell to the floor. Her bra had a front closure which yielded easily to my hand. Her C cup breasts still stood proud, her large pink nipples erect. I rubbed her nipples between my fingers, which made Jaime's breath catch and she whimpered. Her fingers were weaved into my hair gripping tightly as she pulled my mouth to hers. Jaime's tongue danced in my mouth against my tongue and teeth. My hands worked down to the button of her pants and unbuttoned then unzipped them. Jaime moved her hands down my back to my butt and grabbed it tightly. She began to move her hips against my erection in that age old rhythm. Suddenly she stepped back saying, "I need you in me, Paul, now!!" She quickly undid the button and zipper of my jeans, then slid them and my boxers down at the same time. My cock bounced up and down as it was freed from its fabric prison. She slid her panties off, revealing her shaved pussy. I grabbed her firm ass in both hands, lifted her up as she wrapped her arms around my neck, and entered her pussy to the hilt in one stroke. Pushing her back against the nearby wall, I thrust in and out of her rapidly. Suddenly, her mouth locked onto mine as she screamed into my mouth as she came, going rigid. Her pussy tightened its grip on my dick, which drove me over the edge and I shot into her. Finally, drained, I carried Jaime to the bed, still joined together. Her eyes, which were closed, suddenly opened as she said, "I swear to you, Paul that I'm never going to leave you ever again. And I swear that I will do my best to make it up to you for the past twenty two years. I love you, baby." As we fell asleep joined together, I said, "I'm never going to let you go, Jaime. I love you too."