

Last Chance

Helen Ying

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I sat there for what seemed like an eternity, watching him. Just watching. And waiting. And hoping he would turn around and see me. Maybe seeing me would make him remember what it was like when we were together. Maybe it would make him want me back.

He didn't notice me sitting across the courtyard from him, staring, watching, thinking. He didn't notice me clenching my fists so hard that my nails dug into my palm. He didn't notice me.

But I knew he was thinking of me. His right hand moved to the fancy lettering on the inside cover of his folder – *Chase Edwards + Linda Morris = Luv foreva*. I'd drawn that when we'd first gotten together last year, going over it with my biro again and again until the words were all but engraved into the cardboard. He'd shaken his head and grinned at me. *You hopeless romantic, you*. I'd smirked back at him. *Just to remind you of me*.

He ran his fingers over the words. I watched, fascinated by the way he was tracing over the letters with his finger. It was mesmerising.

I took a deep breath. Maybe the best thing to do would be to talk to him, face-to-face like the adults that we were. His group was leaving. Now was my perfect opportunity to talk to him, to ask him the question I'd been dying to ask.

Do you still love me?

It had been perfect when we first started out. I liked him, he liked me and neither of us cared what anyone else thought about us. He treated me well; I tried my best to make him happy. For a while, it all worked out.

But I slowly began to feel like he wasn't worth all the effort. It wasn't that he changed so much as he just wasn't enough for me. Solid, dependable Chase. Always there, never any surprises – some call it reliable but I called it boring. I was yearning for excitement, for the rebel who only I would be able to tame, for the drama of broken hearts, bitch fights and screaming matches. Chase couldn't offer me any of that.

I knew my yearning didn't make much sense, which was why I stayed with Chase. I stayed and waited, hoping either that I would grow out of the phase, he might change or that he would give me an excuse to dump him. It took a while for the solution to present itself. But eventually, he slipped up.

He's overprotective. I told him I wanted to take a break. He didn't argue, because that's just how Chase was, but I knew I had just shattered his heart. It was really hard, knowing that it would be so easy to make him happy again – all I had to do was to get back together with him. But I didn't want

to. I felt terrible about it. I cried, I tormented myself with it, but soon, the guilt was overwhelmed by the excitement – I was finally free to flirt with danger.

Max was your typical rebel – always late or never turning up at all, a flat-out refusal to wear the school uniform correctly despite numerous warnings and threats from school authorities, a tendency to say the wrong thing at the wrong time... He was my first ‘exciting’ boyfriend after Chase. Break-ups occurred every few weeks, and were invariably followed by screaming matches where the words ‘bitch’ and ‘bastard’ were severely overused. We would then get back together a few days later and the cycle would repeat itself.

As they say, a bad boy will always break your heart. I honestly did care about Max. He was a great guy, but being misunderstood meant that he’d always been labelled a rebel. I like to think that he really did care about me too. But after the fifth break-up, I’d had enough. I needed someone dependable, someone I could count on to support me and be by my side. That person was not Max, but Chase.

So, as I sat there in the courtyard watching Chase, I had every reason to be nervous. I knew beyond reasonable doubt that if Chase and I got back together, I would break his heart again. And I really didn’t want to do that. But I needed him to be there for me.

I took a deep breath and walked right up to him.

“Chase, can you give me another chance?”

He turned, surprised. Then his eyes fixed on me and they hardened, but not before I saw the hurt still simmering under the surface.

“Linda. Leave me alone. I’m sorry, but I can’t. Don’t you need to *maximise* the fun in your life?”

I opened my mouth to speak, but he cut me off.

“Last time, you knew that you could control me because I loved you, so you took advantage of it. But I’m going to try my best to stop you from hurting me again, and that plan starts here with me rejecting you.”

And with that, he walked out of my life.

I have to say I deserved it. But the truth is, I don’t believe in true love. I don’t believe in fairy tale endings and soul mates. I don’t believe in destiny, fate, karma, divine intervention, whatever you want to call it... I don’t believe in any of those things, so I don’t play by the same rules as everyone else, because they do believe.

What do I believe in? I believe in blind luck, in blundering your way through life and persevering even when you know it’s a lost cause. I believe in trust and hope, even though hope is a bitch that lets you down half the time and in the other half is what keeps you going through the dark. I believe in the fallibility of mankind and that all good things must come to an end.