

# Love Hurts

*Jonathon Waterman*

I would like to take a moment to thank my dear friend, Margaret, for extensively reviewing each chapter and offering suggestions while this novel was a work-in-progress. Also, my former landlord, Wes, whose gay lifestyle served as an inspiration for some of this novel's characters.

*Jonathon Waterman*

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*Jonathon Waterman*

Please send any questions or comments to [PeedysWorld@Gmail.com](mailto:PeedysWorld@Gmail.com)

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## PROLOGUE

*(From the epilogue of my novel: Hopeless Love)*

### Denmark

Standing together near the end of Valby Park about a stone's throw from Copenhagen's infamous Rose Garden, two teens, for the lack of having anything better to do, took in the scenery while their parents and uncles dashed around like rats in a timed maze as they made the final preparations for the upcoming ceremony.

Surrounding the youth, was a dazzling array of plant life in all forms, shapes, and colors – including various circular flower beds containing trees, hybrids, and wild roses – which indubitably enhanced the landscape. And, not too far away from where Chad Jr. and Jose Jr. were instructed by their parents to wait, a large children's playground provided a place where numerous kids could romp, while their parents either chatted with friends or walked their dogs down the park's countless trails.

"Are you starting to get hungry?" fourteen-year-old Chad asked his one-year-younger brother in newly learned Danish as he glanced at his slender stomach. "I'm starved. We haven't ate anything since breakfast - and that seems like an eternity ago."

"I agree," Jose said, displaying a broad smile. "It's been at least three hours. Is there someplace close where we can grab something?"

Chad pointed to a bright yellow-colored building about seventy-five meters away. It looked like a café built sometime during the 1940's.

"I think so. On an awning hanging above the front door of that place over there, I see a name in bold letters - so I'm pretty sure it's a place to eat."

Jose turned to gaze at it. "Okay." He then began to search his pockets for any leftover cash he might have accidentally stashed. Upon not finding any, "You got any money?" he asked his half-brother. "You know, some of those strange-looking Kroners? I spent everything Mom gave me in the hotel's game room last night."

"I think I might," Chad answered. Reaching into his back pocket, he pulled out the bucking bronco imprinted, brown leather wallet Uncle Mike had given him the previous Christmas. Inside, resting next to a few leftover Chilean pesos, he found three kroners - valued at five dollars apiece. "I think this will do."

Jose stared at the Danish bills and grinned. "I agree, this should be enough as long as we each only order a sandwich and drink. Let's go!"

Chad nodded, and the two of them started to head down the sidewalk.

"Hey you two. Wait a minute. Where in the world do you think you're going?" Maria yelled upon seeing her sons starting to leave the vicinity where the adults had been getting all last-minute preparations ready. "Uncle Mike and Eric's civil union about to begin in a few minutes."

Chad peeked at his Timex. "It is? But, Mom, we're both starving. All we've had to eat this morning was a handful of buttered rolls and a bowl of oatmeal. It wasn't near enough."

Maria gazed at her youths and chuckled. "And what about the Danish pastries I saw the two of you scoffing down? I know there was more than enough to hold you at least until lunchtime."

Jose sheepishly grinned and glanced at his older brother.

"Not really. If we were still adolescents, you'd be right. But we're teenagers now, Mom. We need to eat a lot so we can grow tall and strong – just like you keep reminding us we should."

Maria glanced at the two like they were a couple of pups and released a long hearty laugh. "Grow?" she said, before pausing for a second. "I seriously doubt you two need to eat more in order to grow. These last couple of years I've been having a dickens of a time trying to keep clothes on you. Now try to forget about those bottomless pits you two call stomachs for about another hour or so and I promise as soon the ceremony is finished, we'll feed you. Okay?"

Both Jose and Chad gazed at their mom and released a loud sigh.

"Okay," Chad replied while Jose nodded. "If you insist."

"I do," Maria said, about to turn back toward where the ceremony was about to be held. "Now just keep yourself busy for an additional ten to fifteen minutes and by then ... everything should be ready."

"Okay, M-o-m," they responded, dragging the word Mom as long as possible.

"So, what do you want to do?" Jose asked his brother after they had strolled down one of the park's main walkways for a couple of minutes.

Chad unexpectedly stopped and began to stare a few meters to his left. "A little sightseeing. I think."

"You think?" Jose looked puzzled and turned to see what had caught his brother's eye.

"Yeah," Chad continued, maintaining his stare. "I think I've found something worthwhile."

Jose looked again in the direction where his brother continued to glare. "Are you talking about the long-haired chick who's walking with the fourteen-year-old dude who's wearing what looks like a classic Pink Floyd t-shirt?"

Chad glanced at his sibling and shook his head. "Yes and No. The girl is definitely attractive and would probably be someone you'd find interesting. But, it's that handsome guy she's with who's caught my attention. He's a real ... ahh ... how would you say ... Teenage man-god?"

Jose smiled. "Could be. Why don't we check them out?"

Chad nodded he agreed. "You know ... if everyone's as open-minded as I heard they are in this culture; it may be possible ... But ..."

"What about Mom and our Dads?" Jose completed for him. "Not to mention, do you actually think we could get those two to agree to hook up with us?"

Chad answered his half-brother with a mischievous smile.

## CHAPTER 1 - You've Got To Be Kidding?

### Arica, Chile

Even though his thesis was due in less than a week and would count as ninety percent of the grade in his English as a Second Language course, Chad Jr. stopped to glance at the gold-framed portrait sitting on the right corner at the back of his walnut desk. The memory it brought of his uncles' wedding always brought a smile.

*How great it was to get to spend the time we did in Denmark, he thought, before continuing working on the paper he was assigned to write. It seems impossible that it happened over four years ago.*

*Alexander, Chad recalled, still reliving the days following his uncles' ceremony, definitely made the trip escalate from being something just barely above mundane, into being downright fantastic. And the fact he also had a sister Jose's age, who was nothing short of being youthfully beautiful with her shiny dark hair and sparkling brown eyes made everything even better. "Now, what was her name?"*

"Whose name?" a voice unexpectedly asked as the sound of male footsteps nearing his bedroom resounded from the hallway.

Chad turned and gazed over his shoulder at the gangly male who entered the doorway.

Jose's abnormally long arms and legs reminded him of the evolution theory which claims man had evolved from lower primates, such as apes.

"I can't remember," Chad said, looking toward the ceiling as if the ceiling light would provide an answer. "But you should know. She was Alexander's sister. You know. The girl you went crazy about."

Jose grinned as the memory of her thin, strong arms wrapping around his chest instantly flashed before him. *Those lips ... Oh, those unbelievable gorgeous, moist ruby-red lips. And those hazel-green eyes. ... No doubt, they were nothing short of being sparkling satellites from above.*

Jose's crooked smile and sudden deep breathing promptly revealed he had entered an eternal falling-in-love daze.

"What? Don't tell me you can't remember her name either, bro," Chad said, interrupting. "It's unbelievable. You're only seventeen and already you're getting to be just like your dad. He's always forgetting things."

"What?" Jose's expression reflected his annoyance. "What in the hell are you talking about Chad? Unlike you, I'm not the least bit forgetful. Alexander's sister's name was Josefina. How could you possibly forget considering how much you teased the two of us about our names being similar?"

Chad chuckled in reply. "Oh yeah. I had forgotten about that. Jose and Josefina -- the perfect young couple. I wonder what she's up to now and if she's got a boyfriend."

Jose shook his head. "No, she doesn't," he said moving closer to his brother. "and neither does Alexander."

Chad seemed shocked at his brother's reply and twisted around to face him. "They don't? He doesn't? How would you know? It's been four years since ..."

Jose laughed. "Since the wild time together we had in Denmark? Or, since we last communicated?"

Chad's expression turned serious. "The latter," he said. "It has been at least four years, hasn't it?"

"Perhaps for you, it has," Jose blurted. "But not for me. Does it matter?"

Chad Jr. paused before he answered.

"Yeah, in a way it does," he said. "After all, Alexander was one heck of a friend. Well, ah-h, actually more than just a friend. But it doesn't really matter anyhow. I'm sure things have changed. Just take a look at me and what's happening. I'm with Felipe now and things are starting to get serious. We're even planning on going to the University of Santiago together and possibly even getting married after we graduate."

"Really?" Jose's eyes rolled upward.

"Yeah. Why?"

Jose moved even closer and placed his hand on Chad's shoulder. "That could be a problem, my friend ... considering the fact Mom and our dads have made plans which involve us going to college in the U.S. this Fall."



"What?" Chad yelled, straightening his back taller than a school boy's who's been reprimanded by his teacher for slouching. "You've got to be kidding. Where in the hell did you come across that piece of crap, and who exactly said it?"

Jose shrugged as if he was bored. After all, the whole topic was something of complete unimportance.

"Mom," he said with a pseudo-southern drawl. "She happened to mention it when I asked her if I could attend college at the same school she did during her freshman year. You know. Florida International University."

Chad's lower jaw dropped. "She did?" He didn't want to believe his ears "Then why in Hades didn't she tell both of us? Are you sure what she said doesn't apply only to you? After all, Mom knows I have already been accepted at the University of Santiago. ... Oh, my Gawd! What am I going to tell Felipe?"

Jose glanced at his panicking brother and started to laugh. "Well, I'd guess you better tell him adios unless he's willing to make a sudden change of plans. Anyway. What does it matter? From what I hear, most likely you're going to be attending classes with the boy of your dreams."

The boy of my dreams?" Chad silently muttered under his breath. "Who in the devil are you talking about?"

## CHAPTER 2 - Sick Joke

### Downtown Arica, Chile

Overhead, numerous gray seagulls could be seen within the blue skies and intermittent cumulus clouds. And regularly, one of the birds would decide to land on top of a lamp post or the sidewalk. Not to mention, someone's car.

No one really minded though since they did a fairly good job of keeping the streets fairly clean.

Today's high temp in Arica, being a typical August afternoon, was a cool 65 degrees and a few hints of the upcoming spring had already made itself seen on rare occasions. However, for now, the South American winter still had a solid grip on the area, and on occasion, the overnight temperature would drop to a cold 50.

Maria didn't care though since inside their Main Street jewelry store it was warm, and all morning they had enjoyed a steady flow of customers.

Within the Vargas' Jewelry, diamond watches or rings were purchased on a regular basis. However, its primary source of income was 24-Karat gold – rings, necklaces, bracelets, pins, you name it. And today, like the days when Victoria (Maria's mother) used to be the manager/owner, and like years past when her grandparents were the same, 24-Karat gold remained heavily in demand.

"Chad. Jose," Maria said, calling out to the dads of her two-soon-to-be secondary school graduate sons as she proceeded to lock the glass display case in front of her. "It's getting near two o'clock. Are you two about ready to close down for Siesta?"

Jose broadly smiled, and Chad nodded in reply.

"I'm more than ready," Jose Sr. added as he commenced to secure their cash register. "I'm starving. Do any of you know what we're having for lunch?"

Chad Sr. laughed and began to follow the other two toward the front door. "Heaven knows. Did anyone call to see what's Carla's fixed?"

"No," was Jose and Maria's joint reply. "But it should be good," Maria added. "She always does a great job, and that's really saying a lot since she even can please your stomach, Jose."

Jose's cheeks paled as if he'd been insulted. "What do you mean by that? I'm not hard to satisfy – especially since we all know I'm still a growing boy?"

Chad turned, before twisting the key in the front door once each of them had passed. "Growing boy?" he sarcastically repeated. "Perhaps the front of your stomach is."

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Hearing an automobile coming to a halt in front of the house, Carla glanced out the front window and saw her employers' white Toyota Prius slowly parallel park.

"Boys. Chad and Jose. Your parents are home," she hollered upon reaching the end of the hallway. "Are you two ready for lunch?"

For a moment, her question was answered by a deafening silence. Then seconds later, "What we having?" a seventeen-year-old voice asked.

"Food, as always," Carla replied as Chad exited his bedroom doorway. "Does it really matter?"

"Well. Sort of," came Jose's reply along with the sound of a beep one would expect to hear if someone was playing a computer game. "I'm kind of busy at the moment."

Carla sighed and headed toward the kitchen where a large pot of Arroz con Pollo (chicken and rice) was almost ready.

"Jose. Chad. Are you home?" Maria called out in a loud voice to her sons as she and her husbands/boyfriends entered their living room. She then paused as she neared their bookshelf.

Next to the family's forty-two-inch TV, on the third shelf on their built-in, dark walnut bookcase, an ancient black-and-white photo of some German soldiers in action stood next to Maria's favorite book – a collection of nursery rhymes her father used to read to her when she was a child. And even this day, even though her father had long passed, it would only take a brief glance at the partially faded photo to make her smile.

*How handsome my Father used to be back then, she thought, taking the picture frame in her hand so she could stare at the cracked photo within. It's no wonder that Mom fell head-over-heels in love with him.*

"So, what do you think?" Jose Sr. asked, repeating his previous question.

Maria gasped as if she had been suddenly awakened. "Think about what? I have no idea what you're talking about."

Jose looked at her and unconsciously shook his head. "I think the three of us ... you, me, and Chad should spend a couple of weeks in Florida after dropping the kids off at the University. Don't you agree? It would be a fantastic, much-needed vacation. Not to mention, we could stop by and say 'Hi' to Mike and Eric."

Maria instantly indicated no. "No. It will never work, Jose. It's impossible. Haven't you forgotten something?"

"I don't think so," Jose replied, momentarily glancing at the ceiling.

Chad looked at him and laughed. "Old age affecting your memory again, old man?"

Jose watched as Chad grabbed a beer and down about half of it.

"No," he replied, grabbing his favorite vino (wine) from the bar and pouring himself a drink. "What is it that I've supposedly forgotten?"

Maria looked at her two favorite men as they displayed a macho stance, and smiled.

"Mike and Eric don't live in South Florida anymore," both Maria and Chad said simultaneously.

"What do you mean?" Jose asked, his mouth open in total disbelief.

"She means they moved, my friend," Chad answered.

"They've moved? When?"

"Roughly four years ago," Maria said, taking a seat on their medium green couch. "Shortly after their ceremony in Denmark."

Jose sighed, feeling a bit stupid, and Chad watched him take a seat in the lounge chair facing the TV.

Soon afterward, Chad Jr. made his way into the living room.

“What’s this I’ve overheard about you three taking a Florida vacation after supposedly dropping Jose and me at some University? You guys must be making some kind of sick joke. Aren’t you?”

## CHAPTER 3 - Teenage Conflict

Inside the Vargas' fifteen hundred square foot home, the living room suddenly got silent. So silent, in fact, one easily could have been able to hear a pin drop.

A question – The Question – was asked. Yet, it seemed no one was prepared to answer, even though the unspoken fact needed to be said was obvious.

*Were we right in not letting Chad know before now?* the three of them (Chad Sr., Jose Sr. and Maria) simultaneously asked without verbally saying a word.

*Perhaps so. Perhaps not.* Chad Sr. mentally answered himself while fidgeting uncomfortably.

Maria paused and took a deep breath. "I think we need to talk," she said before taking a step in her son's direction.

The corner of Chad Jr's lips turned downward and he took a step back.

Chad Jr. loved his mother and all throughout his childhood she had always been there for him, no matter how good or bad things had been. Yet now, at a time of true crisis, he had trouble meeting her eyes.

For the first time in his life, he felt like he couldn't trust her. Thus, he turned to glance at this father. But, it didn't help.

For like his mother, his father, Chad Sr. had also been involved in plotting this scheme. And he, just like his mother, Maria, and step-father, Jose Sr. was part of the trio which developed the conspiracy to not only ruin his life, but ruin the life of his friend – his lover – and eventually lifetime companion, as well.

"Please. Don't leave," Maria said as her oldest started down the hallway toward his bedroom without replying.

Her eyes reflected sadness and her expression conveyed she understood his anger.

"Why shouldn't I?" Chad eventually said in a raised voice as he twisted around to face her. "It seems the three of you have already laid out my future and set up

everything according to what you desire ... without even bothering to consider anything I might want. Thanks for not giving a damn."

"Not giving a damn?" Maria repeated, obviously taken back. "How could you think your fathers and I wouldn't ..."

"Maria. Darling," Chad Sr. said, interrupting her. "Please wait a minute. Whether we actually care or not really isn't the important thing here."

Chad Sr.'s crimson cheeks reflected his anger and he turned to face his son.

"You're definitely way off base Chad if you think for one single solitary minute you're going to talk to your mother like that. Using a raised voice and profanity is strictly is not allowed by you or your brother, and I feel that you owe her an apology."

Chad Jr. raised his eyebrows. "An apology? I owe her an apology? You've got to be kidding. Don't you think I have the right to be upset? I just found out from Jose that because my little prick of a brother wants to go to school in Miami, my life's about to get totally screwed."

"I mean, wow! I guess I'd better drop my drawers and grab some Vaseline, because here it comes ... royally."

Jose Sr.'s eyes burned upon hearing Chad Jr.'s words. And if it were humanly possible, all present would have been able to see the steam rising from Chad Sr.'s forehead.

"That's more than enough from you, young man. Go to your room," Maria quietly ordered. "And don't even think about coming out until one of us calls you."

Unlike her son's father, when angered, Maria normally had the ability to remain calm – and usually, it was the calmness of her tone that indicated the depth of her anger.

"You know I really don't have to," Chad replied in a rebellious tone just before obeying. "I AM eighteen now and can leave whenever I want."

Both Chad and Jose Sr. chuckled in reply. Whereas, Maria only folded her arms across her chest.

"Is that what you really want, son?" his father asked. "Living on your own and having to support yourself isn't all most people your age makes it out to be."

Chad glanced at him and nonchalantly shrugged his shoulders.

"Your father's right," Jose Sr. interjected. "And you better think first before you act. After all, the cost of renting your own place, paying for utilities and purchasing every single bite you chow down doesn't come cheap. Not to mention the cost of tuition."

Chad first acted like he was going to ignore them and began to slip inside his room. However, seconds later, "So you won't even pay for my schooling," he yelled from the doorway.

All three parents simultaneously shook their heads.

"Not if you move out we won't," Maria added. "You'd be on your own."

Chad glanced at her and gulped, then entered his bedroom and took a seat in front of his computer.

A moment later, Jose Jr. followed him in.

"Boy, Bro," Jose began in a strange upbeat tone considering what had transpired. "When you piss our parents off, you really go all the way ... holding nothing back."

Chad looked at him and scowled. "Who said I was trying to piss them off? I wasn't. I'm just trying to fight for the right to go to whatever in the Hell university I want to ... and I don't need Mom, our Dads, or even you telling me otherwise."

Jose Jr. narrowed both eyes and appeared to be puzzled. "What do you mean, me? I'm not telling you what to do. In fact, if you and your gay boyfriend decide to move a million miles from here, I personally wouldn't really give a rat's ass as long as you tweeted me now and then just to let me know you're still alive."

Chad shrugged his shoulder and almost laughed. "Gee. No real surprise there. I always felt the person you cared about most was yourself."

"And, by the way, oh holy so-called heterosexual one. Since you decided to once again go out of your way to bring up the fact that I'm gay, there is something I would like to remind you. Ever since you were old enough to discover you liked being sexually touched – I don't recall even once where you didn't enjoy the intimate encounters we've shared."

Jose Jr.'s cheeks instantly blushed. But not a single word was verbally spoken.



## CHAPTER 4 - Reality Hurts

Maria stared down the carpeted hallway as she contemplated the conversation she had with her son, Chad Jr.

Words. Hurtful words. Words that wedge a dagger inside the victim's heart had been spoken.

They were, no doubt, the kind which never should have been said. And their meaning, undoubtedly, could not, would not reflect the real feelings of the person who spoke them.

Yet, the words had been spoken and now with the conversation over, her oldest resided in his bedroom.

Soon after Chad entered there, Jose Jr. followed him. Yet, in only a matter of minutes, the younger boy rapidly left – obviously upset about something.

*I wonder what happened?* Maria silently asked as she watched. *Did the two have another one of their rifts, or was there something more?*

"Jose Jr. dear," she called in his direction, toward the end of the hallway. "Could you drop by the living room for a moment? I'd like to talk."

For nearly a full thirty seconds, Maria's pseudo-cheerful request only met dead silence.

Then, "No. Let's not, Mom," a distant voice eventually said. "At least not now. There's something I need to reconsider."

*Reconsider?* The word caused one of Maria's eyebrows to rise. "What do you need to reconsider, son?"

Jose Jr. hesitated before answering.

"Oh. I don't know," he finally said in a sarcastic tone. "Maybe the realization that Chad is nothing more than a gigantic, self-centered, moronic asshole."

The fathers of the two boys, who were currently relaxing in the living room, sipping a glass of wine, instantly shared a surprised look.

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