

A romantic scene of a man and a woman holding hands on a beach at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow over the water and sky. The couple is silhouetted against the bright light, with the woman's hair catching some of the light. The overall mood is peaceful and intimate.

SECOND CHANCES

Emma Leigh Reed

Emma Leigh Reed's *Second Chances* is a sweet and poignant love story, guaranteed to tug at your heart strings.

~Laura Moore, Bestselling Author of *Once Tasted*

Chapter 1

Kira Nichols pushed back her shoulder length light brown hair as the crisp salt air blew it across her face. As she walked up the path to the cul-de-sac, her sneakers left small impressions in the soft sand.

She sprang into a run when she heard the rumble of a sports car that was going too fast for a street where small children liked to play. She arrived at the cul-de-sac just as the vehicle skidded to a stop in front of the empty lot across from her house. Then she caught her breath as a lean man with rugged features got out of the car. He flashed her a smile that probably caused most women to melt at his feet.

As the man moved across the lot toward the foundation, which had been capped over and abandoned for about a year now, Kira squared her shoulders and approached him. He was at least six feet tall, and she felt minute beside him. She willed herself to appear calm, but she could feel her cheeks begin to flush.

“Grant Rutledge.” He paused and extended his hand to her. His deep voice, like a shot of brandy, was warm and soothing. She swallowed hard, her anger at his reckless driving temporarily forgotten. Then it flared back, and she ignored his hand.

“Do you know there are children in this area?” she demanded, planting her hands on her hips.

“My apologies if you felt I was going too fast.” He gave an exaggerated glance around. “There aren’t any children about now.”

He offered that smile again, and in spite of her anger, her heart softened for a moment. His hand was still extended, so she shook his calloused fingers. Tingles shot up her arm, and she struggled to keep herself from yanking her hand away. Heat flooded her face. She prayed he couldn’t tell.

“Again, I apologize. I hope you won’t think I have no regard for children.”

Kira turned to go. She gestured absently at his car and said, “I just know the type.”

As she forced herself to walk slowly toward her house, she could feel his eyes on her back. She felt both foolish and thankful that she had stayed in shape.

The solitude of the cul-de-sac was one of the reasons she had always loved this spot as a child whenever she had visited her grandfather. Her house, which she had inherited from him, had been the only one in this two-lot area for years, but it looked like they were going to pick up the pace across the street again. She hoped the new construction company would limit their work to business hours, particularly the hours when Jared would be in preschool.

She thought back to the long hours the last group of workers had kept when they put in the foundation. Jared had been unable to sleep due to the noise and disruption of his routine. Hopefully this time around the noise

wouldn't disturb him. He was just beginning to sleep through the night.

If only she could.