

Cambridge University Press
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Sue Leather
Excerpt
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Chapter 1 *Gina*

I love the movies. New movies, old movies. I went to the movies a lot in Toronto. And it all started when I met Gina at the movies.

Gina! We met in October. Four years ago. We met outside a cinema. There was no snow but it was cold. It's cold in Toronto in fall. I was there to buy a ticket for a movie. It was *Forrest Gump*. She was there too, and we started to talk. Just like that.

'Hi,' I said, 'do you live around here?'

'Yes, I do. I live very near here,' she said.



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‘Do you? Me too,’ I said.

She was nice. Really nice. I liked her smile. She gave me her telephone number. Before she went, she said, ‘Oh, you didn’t tell me your name.’ I laughed.

‘My name’s Brad, Brad Black.’

I phoned her the next day. ‘Why don’t you come out with me?’ I asked. ‘To Salvo’s Italian restaurant. It’s cheap but nice. The spaghetti’s very good.’

‘Mmm, I love Italian food. My mum’s Italian, you know. I love spaghetti,’ she said. I was surprised. Really surprised. She was beautiful.

I went to her house at 7.30, to the address she gave me. We lived in the same area of the city. The poor area. She lived with her mother, who was old and sometimes sick. I went in the house to wait for Gina.

‘Look after my daughter,’ her mother said to me.

‘Sure,’ I said. I smiled my best smile. My good boy smile. Her mother looked at me. Was I good for her daughter? I was wearing my new shirt and pants. I looked good. Handsome. Black hair and blue eyes. She smiled at me.

Gina and I went to Salvo’s. From that night it was our restaurant, our place. I started seeing her a lot. We fell in love. We were happy. I mean, really happy. Like in a movie. Like in *Love Story*. I loved that movie. I saw it five times.

Three months later we went to Salvo’s restaurant again. I said, ‘Gina, I love you. I want to marry you . . . but we need more money.’ We were so happy, but we had no money. I was a handyman and I didn’t make much money. And Gina was a teacher of small children. She was poor too.

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Gina wanted to marry me. ‘Brad,’ said Gina, ‘money’s not important. We’re poor, but we’re happy.’

‘But, Gina,’ I said, ‘if we want to get married and have children, we need money. We need a car, clothes, a beautiful house in Paris.’

I saw Paris in the movies and I wanted to live there. Gina smiled.

Gina and I talked a lot about money. Gina always smiled



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at me. She was happy, but I wanted everything. Just like in the movies.

‘I’m a handyman,’ I said. ‘I’m not a rich man! How can I make a lot of money?’

Like I told you, I like old movies. Gina and I went to the cinema every week. Every Saturday night. One Saturday we went to see a movie called *Dead Money*. It was about a man and a woman. Poor, just like us.

This man and woman, they had an idea, a very good idea. Well . . . she had the idea. She knew a man, another man. He was really rich but very old and sick. This man liked her. He was lonely. She married him. Then, about six months later, he died suddenly. She got all his money. It was millions of dollars. She got the money and married her young boyfriend. Happy ever after!

After the movie, we went for a drink.

‘That’s it!’ I said to Gina. ‘That’s it, Gina! We can get money like that.’

Gina looked at me and smiled. ‘Please, Brad,’ she said, ‘don’t say those things. Money isn’t everything!’

‘But, Gina,’ I said, ‘how can you say that? We must have money!’

Gina looked at me again. She didn’t smile. ‘Listen to me, Brad,’ she said. ‘It’s just a movie. It’s just a stupid movie.’

Stupid eh? Well, maybe it wasn’t so stupid. I thought about it a lot.

Then one day I met Carrie.

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