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BY ERICH SEGAL

LOVE STORY



爱情故事

[美国]埃里奇·西格尔 著

译林出版社

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EVERYBODY LOVES *LOVE STORY!*

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ing it in key with our times and avoiding the
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*Meas esse aliquid putare nugas.
• • • namque • • • solentis*

For Sylvia Herscher and John Flaxman

Love Story



What can you say about a twenty-five-year-old girl who died?

~~That she was~~ beautiful. And brilliant. That she loved Mozart and Bach. And the Beatles. And me. Once, when she specifically lumped me with those musical types, I asked her what the order was, and she replied, smiling, "Alphabetical." At the time I smiled too. But now I sit and wonder whether she was listing me by my first name—in which case I would trail Mozart—or by my last name, in which case I would edge in there between Bach and the Beatles. Either way I don't come first, which for some stupid reason bothers hell out of

me, having grown up with the notion that I always had to be number one. Family heritage, don't you know?

In the fall of my senior year, I got into the habit of studying at the Radcliffe library. Not just to eye the cheese, although I admit that I liked to look. The place was quiet, nobody knew me, and the reserve books were less in demand. The day before one of my history hour exams, I still hadn't gotten around to reading the first book on the list, an endemic Harvard disease. I ambled over to the reserve desk to get one of the tomes that would bail me out on the morrow. There were two girls working there. One a tall tennis-anyone type, the other a bespectacled mouse type. I opted for Minnie Four-Eyes. 比萨加B.

"Do you have *The Waning of the Middle Ages*?"

She shot a glance up at me.

"Do you have your own library?" she asked.

"Listen, Harvard is allowed to use the Radcliffe library."

"I'm not talking legality, Preppie, I'm talking ethics. You guys have five million books. We have a few lousy thousand."

Christ, a superior-being type! The kind who think since the ratio of Radcliffe to Harvard is five to one, the girls must be five times as smart. I normally cut these types to ribbons, but just then I badly needed that goddamn book.

"Listen, I need that goddamn book."

"Wouldja please watch your profanity, Preppie?"

"What makes you so sure I went to prep school?"

"You look stupid and rich," she said, removing her glasses.

"You're wrong," I protested. "I'm actually smart and poor."

"Oh, no, Preppie. *I'm* smart and poor."

She was staring straight at me. Her eyes were brown. Okay, maybe I look rich, but I wouldn't let some 'Cliffie—even one with pretty eyes—call me dumb.

"What the hell makes you so smart?" I asked.

"I wouldn't go for coffee with you," she answered.

"Listen—I wouldn't ask you."

"That," she replied, "is what makes you stupid."

Let me explain why I took her for coffee. By shrewdly capitulating at the crucial moment—i.e., by pretending that I suddenly wanted to—I got my book. And since she couldn't leave until the library closed, I had plenty of time to absorb some pithy phrases about the shift of royal dependence from cleric to lawyer in the late eleventh century. I got an A minus on the exam, coincidentally the same grade I assigned to Jenny's legs when she first walked from behind that desk. I can't say I gave her costume an honor grade, however; it was a bit too Boho for my taste. I especially loathed that Indian thing she carried for a handbag. Fortunately I didn't mention this, as I later discovered it was of her own design.

We went to the Midget Restaurant, a nearby sandwich joint which, despite its name, is not restricted to people of small stature. I ordered two coffees and a brownie with ice cream (for her).

*is restricted to people of small
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stature.*

"I'm Jennifer Cavilleri," she said, "an American of Italian descent."

As if I wouldn't have known. "And a music major," she added.

"My name is Oliver," I said.

"First or last?" she asked.

"First," I answered, and then confessed that my entire name was Oliver Barrett. (I mean, that's most of it.)

"Oh," she said. "Barrett, like the poet?"

"Yes," I said. "No relation."

In the pause that ensued, I gave inward thanks that she hadn't come up with the usual distressing question: "Barrett, like the hall?" For it is my special albatross to be related to the guy that built Barrett Hall, the largest and ugliest structure in Harvard Yard, a colossal monument to my family's money, vanity and flagrant Harvardism.

After that, she was pretty quiet. Could we have run out of conversation so quickly? Had I turned her off by not being related to the poet? What? She simply sat there, semi-smiling at me. For something to do, I checked out her notebooks. Her handwriting was curious—small sharp little letters with no capitals (who did she think she was, e. e. cummings?). And she was taking some pretty snowy courses: Comp. Lit. 105, Music 150, Music 201—

"Music 201? Isn't that a graduate course?"

—She nodded yes, and was not very good at masking her pride.

"Renaissance polyphony."

"What's polyphony?"

"Nothing sexual, Preppie."

Why was I putting up with this? Doesn't she read the *Crimson*? Doesn't she know who I am?

"Hey, don't you know who I am?"

"Yeah," she answered with kind of disdain. "You're the guy that owns Barrett Hall."

She didn't know who I was.

"I don't *own* Barrett Hall," I quibbled. "My great-grandfather happened to give it to Harvard."

"So his not-so-great grandson would be sure to get in!"

That was the limit.

"Jenny, if you're so convinced I'm a loser, why did you bulldoze me into buying you coffee?"

She looked me straight in the eye and smiled.

"I like your body," she said.

Part of being a big winner is the ability to be a good loser. There's no paradox involved. It's a distinctly Harvard thing to be able to turn any defeat into victory.

"Tough luck, Barrett. You played a helluva game."

"Really, I'm so glad you fellows took it. I mean, you people need to win so badly."

Of course, an out-and-out triumph *is* better. I mean, if you have the option, the last-minute score is preferable. And as I walked Jenny back to her dorm, I had not despaired of ultimate victory over this snotty Radcliffe bitch.

"Listen, you snotty Radcliffe bitch, Friday night is the Dartmouth hockey game."

"So?"

"So I'd like you to come."

She replied with the usual Radcliffe reverence for sport:

"Why the hell should I come to a lousy hockey game?"

I answered casually:

"Because I'm playing."

There was a brief silence. I think I heard snow falling.

"For which side?" she asked.

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Oliver Barrett IV *Senior*
Ipswich, Mass. *Phillips Exeter*
Age 20 *5'11", 185 lbs.*
Major: Social Studies
Dean's List: '61, '62, '63
All-Ivy First Team: '62, '63
Career Aim: Law

By now Jenny had read my bio in the program. I made triple sure that Vic Claman, the manager, saw that she got one.

"For Christ's sake, Barrett, is this your first date?"

"Shut up, Vic, or you'll be chewing your teeth."

As we warmed up on the ice, I didn't wave to her

(how uncool!) or even look her way. And yet I think she *thought* I was glancing at her. I mean, did she remove her glasses during the National Anthem out of respect for the flag?

By the middle of the second period, we were beating Dartmouth 0-0. That is, Davey Johnston and I were about to perforate their nets. The Green bastards sensed this, and began to play rougher. Maybe they could break a bone or two before we broke them open. The fans were already screaming for blood. And in hockey this literally means blood or, failing that, a goal. As a kind of noblesse oblige, I have never denied them either.

Al Redding, Dartmouth center, charged across our blue line and I slammed into him, stole the puck and started down-ice. The fans were roaring. I could see Davey Johnston on my left, but I thought I would take it all the way, their goalie being a slightly chicken type I had terrorized since he played for Deerfield. Before I could get off a shot, both their defensemen were on me, and I had to skate around their nets to keep hold of the puck. There were three of us, flailing away against the boards and each other. It had always been my policy, in pile-ups like this, to lash mightily at anything wearing enemy colors. Somewhere beneath our skates was the puck, but for the moment we were concentrating on beating the shit out of each other.

A ref blew his whistle.

“You—two minutes in the box!”

I looked up. He was pointing at me. Me? What had I done to deserve a penalty?

“Come on, ref, what’d I do?”

Somehow he wasn’t interested in further dialogue. He was crawling to the officials’ desk—“Number seven, two minutes”—and signaling with his arms.

I remonstrated a bit, but that’s de rigueur. The crowd expects a protest, no matter how flagrant the offense. The ref waved me off. Seething with frustration, I skated toward the penalty box. As I climbed in, listening to the click of my skate blades on the wood of the floor, I heard the bark of the PA system:

“Penalty. Barrett of Harvard. Two minutes. Holding.”

The crowd booed; several Harvards impugned the vision and integrity of the referees. I sat, trying to catch my breath, not looking up or even out onto the ice, where Dartmouth outmanned us.

“Why are you sitting here when all your friends are out playing?”

The voice was Jenny’s. I ignored her, and exhorted my teammates instead.

“C’mon, Harvard, get that puck!”

“What did you do wrong?”

I turned and answered her. She was my date, after all.

“I tried too hard.”

And I went back to watching my teammates try to hold off Al Redding’s determined efforts to score.

“Is this a big disgrace?”

“Jenny, please, I’m trying to concentrate!”

“On what?”

“On how I’m gonna total that bastard Al Redding!”