



*Cherished
Diamond*
The Love Story

Ron Alexander

Author's Note

Tina Fuller died from Ovarian Cancer on December 19th 2009. The dialogue in *Cherished Diamond* has been reconstructed from emails exchanged between Tina Fuller and author Ron Alexander between the years of 2006 and 2010. Events and chronology are based on corroborations with family and friends and from entries in Tina's journal. The author has strived to tell the story of the intense love affair between them without embellishment or prejudice, fully accepting the risk that his character, lifestyle or judgment might be embarrassed or maligned in the process.



***Relationships are valuable and
should be viewed that way***

***Every time a relationship is damaged,
the damage takes feelings away from it.
When one tries to rekindle those feeling,
the damage done makes it harder and harder
each time.***

***If you truly value your relationship,
you should avoid the constance damage.
Because it never fails that one day,
the afflicted damage will be too much to bare.***

***That relationship that you so value,
so much more you will value it.***

--Tina Fuller, Journal, 1985

Prelude



Where is the sparkle of light in her eyes? What has happened to the glossy moisture that is usually on her lips? There are dark blotches of parched skin on her face. She looks fragile, indifferent, and detached. She bears no resemblance to the woman I know.

“Hello, Tina” I say in a whisper, not wanting to disturb her, but wanting to get her attention. She nods her head. She recognizes me, but looks away, staring blankly at a bare wall as if she sees something beneath the white paint and plaster.

She has lost so much weight. This can’t be my baby. I feel a helpless horror boiling deep inside of me. She had asked that I come see her, yet I want to leave her. I am frightened and shocked by the sight of her. I try to wrap my mind around what I am seeing. I strain to grasp this moment. I cannot comprehend what is unfolding before me. I ask God to pin down to the chair where I am sitting, so that I cannot run away from her..

I rub my hand along her thin fingers. She neither reacts nor responds to me holding her hand. She’s motionless, still staring expressionless at the wall. Wrapped around her head is scarf, something she would never wear on her head around visitors under any circumstance. She prides herself on being impeccably dressed for any occasion. Why, then, is her head covered by a black scarf?

“You’re still my pretty girl,” I say to her. “I love you.”

“I don’t feel pretty,” she says softly back to me without turning her attention from the wall.

Never, for any reason, has she lacked the confidence that she was beautiful. Never has she ever doubted herself. If only she would talk to me, tell me why she is writhing away, and digressing from the proud woman I know her to be. If only she would tell me how to help her.

Chapter One

God put us into each other's life and has been guiding us from the first day we met. Everything that is good has been placed before us to achieve and cherish, so that we will have a future together.

--Tina

Tina owned and operated a successful childcare business back in 2006 when we first met on the internet. We wrote detailed, funny emails to each other, talked on the telephone several times a day, and had finally decided to formally meet on this day inside of a bookstore.

I arrived first and watched as she parked her car. As she walked towards me, I could see feet, but her legs were wearing a pair of jeans that her. She walked with was bold and riveting, a woman to be reckoned



that she was short, about 5'5 gangly and long. She was accentuate all 120 pounds of attitude, a sexy swagger that leaving no doubt that she was with.

She brought success and stability to our friendship, two adult children, and two grandchildren. I ventured into the relationship with her a car salesman's job, and hope that I will finally get it right this time. She was God's reward for the six months I have not used drugs.

"How are you?" I coolly asked when we sit at a table inside of the bookstore.

"I'm good," she responded, smiling, looking deep into my eyes. *I hope this guy is not another jerk trying to get me into bed. He is good looking though. He might be different from the others but he also might be full of drama like all of the fools I've dealt with. I will play along with him and see where this goes.*

She was not pretty in the usual ways. God, I imagined, had spent considerable time and care molding her full lips, shaping her luminous, intense eyes and florescent, white teeth against a complexion that was dark and sparkling. She has the type of beauty that requires more than a mere glance to fully appreciate, an attractiveness that could be easily overlooked if not studied.

"I have something for you to read," I said to her."

"To read?" *This is an interesting approach on a first date.*

“This is a magazine article I wrote a few years ago when I was a crack addict.”

“Oh, okay.....” *I knew it! Another jerk! I knew that there would be something wrong with him. There’s always something wrong with them. A damn crack head! He’s the last thing I need in my life. I wanted so much for him to be someone I could trust. Now this. He’s probably a thief and a liar too.*

Revealing the most painful and destructive milestones in my life was a huge gamble. She might walk out on me.

“I had a sister who was addicted to drugs,” she said in a straightforward manner.

“Was . . .?”

“Yes. She passed away a few years ago. Not from drugs, though. She pulled her life together, and went back to school and got a degree. She lived long enough to get herself back together.”

“You understand, then, what I am going through?”

“Yes, I think so.” *Sure I know. That’s why I am not gonna trust you. I helped my sister because she was my sister. I certainly do not intend to get involve with a jerk like you.*

* * * *

I parked my car, and put out my cigarette. Tina had invited out to her home. This will be my first time going to her home. I splashed cologne around my neck, hoping to smother out the odor from cigarette smoke and hide that I am unable to kick the nicotine habit.

I looked myself over in the rear view mirror. My head is cleanly shaved. I had neatly trimmed my beard. I had brushed my teeth to a dazzling sheen. I wanted to smell good and look good for Tina.

She came to the door wearing a green patterned dress that flowed along the curves of her petite figure. She was gorgeous and all smiles, leaving no doubt that she was happy to see me.

“Hi,” she said cheerfully. *Hmmm . . .he smells so good. I hope I am not making a mistake. I could change my mind and tell him I’m not feeling so good tonight.*

“Why Hello to you,” I said back to her, trying to match her energy.

She stepped back from the door and I walked into the living room.

“Make yourself comfortable.”



I sat myself on the sofa. She joined me. The perfume she was wearing is *White Diamonds*. I knew the fragrance. I've dated other women who wear it, but on Tina the fragrance was more amorous, more mesmerizing, more poignant and passionate. She's an aphrodisiac. I felt her presence, her energy, her zeal for life and the passion inside of her waiting to be unlocked.

"Would you like to watch a movie?"

"Sure," I answered, relieved by the distraction.

"Any movie in particular? I have hundreds of dvd's."

"You pick the movie," I quickly said back to her. I was enjoying watching her. She was sexy, hot and cool at the same. I noticed that she had moved closer to me. Her leg was touching mine.

"Have you seen *Tombstone*?" she wanted to know *I must be careful with this guy. I promised myself and God to never sleep with another man unless I'm married. Never again will this happen.*

"That's one of my favorite movies!" How did she know?

She looks underneath the wide screen television for the movie and placed the DVD in the player. We watched the two hour movie, munching on popcorn, laughing and talking between scenes. It was the type of evening with her that I had hoped for.

When the movie ended, I placed my hand on her face and gently kissed her on the lips. We kissed for several minutes when she pulled away. "It's late. I have to get up early. I'll call you in the morning."

I reluctantly left, fanaticizing of what might have happen had I stayed a few minute more. I lite up a cigarette in my car and sat for a few moments, savoring the smell and touch of her. She was the one. She was right for me. She was the woman I saw in my dreams. She appealed to me on many different levels.

When I turned the key to start my car, the damn thing won't start. I got out, looked under the hood at the engine but I can't figure it out. Back inside my car, I began to panic. What can I do now? I decided that I would sleep in my car for a few hours. Maybe then my car might start. I reclined my seat back to get comfortable and sleep, but I was too excited to sleep, thinking about my future with Tina.

Within a few minutes, she came to the door, presumably, I thought, to wave goodbye. Or had she been watching me from a window? She gestured for me to come back into the house.

She was wearing a bath robe. "What's wrong?" she wanted to know. "My car won't start."

What's he trying to pull? I'm not going to feed into this bullshit! He could have at least come up with something a little more original. I'll fix him. She goes up the steps and returns with a blanket and pillow. "You can sleep on the sofa. I hope you will be comfortable."

A woman would have had to have gone through a crisis in her own life to understand the turmoil I was struggling with. She would have had to have faced down her own personal challenges and wrestled down her own demons; maybe not an drug addiction, but something that rocked her world, seared her soul, beat her down, yet she stood up and is victorious.

Apologies are not amends and amends are not always accepted, or mean that people will ever again love, respect, and admire me. Smoking crack had trampled over my feelings, crushing any expectations that I would ever restore my life, recover what was lost or sacrificed while I incessantly smoked crack without regard for the people who loved me.

Although I have stopped smoking crack, I am less sure of how to mend the broken relationships that I surrendered to my addiction in 1985 when my lust for cocaine first began. I know even less about romantic love. Most---if not all---of my romantic relationships had failed, had imploded, had ended without fulfilling my hope for a special woman stepping into my life, a woman capable of fathoming the wrecking ball I regularly used to try and fix all that was wrong in my life.

Tina, I hoped, might end the cycle of self-sabotage and self-destruction that ravished my life. I am hopeful that a relationship with her will not end up in the pile of trash with all of my other failed relationships.

Chapter Two

I know that God is protecting my heart, blocking it from me to give completely, while he prepares me to be a better woman than I already am. He will release it when I meet Mr. Right.

--Tina

My home was a recovery house where I was living with ten other men in a renovated five bedroom home in the Kensington area of Philadelphia. The neighborhood was well known as an exodus and haven for drugs addicts, alcoholics, methadone clinics, detox facilities and treatment centers. Old school home owners resented becoming a dumping ground for drug addicts, drug dealing and the violence that goes along with the lifestyle. Long gone were the glory days of the early 1900's when Kensington was the major manufacturing district in Philadelphia. Kensington was once Anglo Saxon and Iris Catholic white. Now days, a racially mixed neighborhood, old folks and homeowners in Kensington were just trying to stay alive and survive in a drug and crime infested neighborhood.

Recovery houses were used by recovering addicts and alcoholics trying to reinvent their lives. Not everyone in recovery houses was trying to stay off drugs. Some people stayed clean and abided by 'house rules,' while others used these houses as revolving doors to stay in their addictions. Then there were the recovery house slumlords, the people who maliciously set up recovery houses with the intent to milk the system, rip off welfare and social security. The recovery house slumlords preyed upon vulnerable addicts and alcoholics.

I was fortunate to land in a recovery house that was clean, comfortable and stable. Yet, I desperately wanted to have my own place again, even considering hatching a plan to move in with Tina. I quickly dished the idea. She wasn't even officially my girlfriend yet. How would I look even asking her if I could move in her? Living with Tina wouldn't be like having my place. I could be romantic but I also lived for being independent, carefree, not tied down, able to come and go as I pleased. I decided that I would be patient. I would wait and save my money.

The way I figured it, I was going to be okay whether I moved out or not. I had just completed my sixth tour of treatment in a rehab. I had

accumulated months and years of information of how to stay clean from drugs. I had the knowledge but lacked the experience.

“You really have two grown kids? You look too young to have kids that old,” I said, smiling. We were out having dinner at her favorite restaurant, Ruby Tuesdays. I was amazed by her delicately and thoughtfully her long, angular fingers sliced through a plate of pasta.

“I’m a single mother.”

“Never married?”

“No . . . I raised my kids by myself.” *They’re fathers were bums. I got them out of my kids’ life.* “ I put myself through college and started my childcare business while raising my kids. It was hard but I managed.

“Businesswoman, single parent, good mother—I’m impressed!”

You should be impressed. Most of you damn men out there ain’t worth a dime. “Thanks,” she said, smiling back at me.

“--And you’re are a singer, too?”

“Yes, I’ve been singing all of my life. My father had a gospel group that my siblings I would sing with occasionally.” *He wasn’t like any of the deadbeats I’ve dealt with. He was a real a man. He took care of his family.*

“How many brothers and sisters do you have?”

“Six brothers, four sisters. I’m the youngest.” *I was his favorite. Everyone seemed to resent it. But even he treated me differently. He brought them all their first cars and got them their first apartments. I had to pay my own way when my turn came around.*

“Have you recorded anything yet.”

“No, not yet, waiting on the right opportunity to come along. I’ve tried working with some producers, but, you know, they were typical men just looking to get me into bed. Anyway, I’m only interested in singing gospel now.

“Like your dad?”

“Yes, like him.”

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