

The Ideal Side of Love

‘Average, but extraordinary, and only twice in a lifetime.’

Stephen Prichard is a resilient and self-made man that has it all, a successful business, great husband, and a summer condo on the waterfront, until life throws a curve ball. After twelve years together, his husband Myron dies of cancer, leaving Stephen to confront a future of uncertainties alone.

Then, fate lends a hand when not one, but two chance encounters with the same stranger put his feelings to the test. First and *second* impressions are lasting. Stephen longs for companionship, and the stranger is attractive, however, he’s also enigmatic and cold, and the memories of Myron are still painfully fresh.

Can a man Stephen barely knows renew his faith in love? But, more importantly, is he willing to let go of the past?

Excerpt:

Wong’s Market had been on the corner of West 21st. and Lonsdale Avenue since Jesus was a baby. It started off as a small general store, six aisles deep with one aisle dedicated solely to the sale of personal hygiene products and the depravation of young boys. I didn’t think there were so many porn magazines. *Busty, Black Booty, Asian Tighties, White Cream, and Hot Mamas*. When we were kids, my mother would send us to pick up a short list of groceries—the basics like milk, butter, and bread. I always did the shopping while my brothers hovered around copies of *Oui* and *Playboy*, ogling the centerfolds. Mr. Wong would yell in broken English from the counter, telling my brothers to get away from his dirty magazines.

“Not ol’ enough!” He’d say.

By the late nineties, Mr. Wong’s son took over the business, realizing that the family sat on a gold mine—two acres of prime commercial real estate. He tore down the old market and built a modern grocery store, adding shopping carts, self-checkout tills, and an ATM machine. No more living above the store, no more rat traps out back by the garbage bins. Wong’s Market was a thriving business, raking in over ten million a year.

The shopping cart had a wobbly wheel, making it difficult to steer. You’d think with all his wealth, young Mr. Wong would fix his damned carts. But, whatever, I didn’t plan on purchasing much, just a few items. Actually, speaking from personal experience, when I lived alone, I never consumed near as much of anything, and I certainly didn’t keep a regular schedule.

I pushed the cart through the juice aisle. Unlike most men who considered themselves hunters when they shopped, I rather enjoyed grocery shopping, and preferred to take my time. Strange as it might sound, I liked to read labels and peruse the multitude of items available.

A liter of cranberry juice was already in the cart. Moving ahead three paces, I placed a bottle of blueberry beside it, and wandered to the next aisle. The cashiers were moderately busy, and the sounds of easy listening created background noise. The activity in the grocery store beat sitting at home alone. Pushing the cart through aisle after aisle, I leaned on the handle, walking at a casual pace with no set goal in mind.

The wheels shimmied to a stop as I bent over to pick up a box of cereal. Then, a baritone voice carried from some area beyond my location. Dropping the box of corn flakes, I pushed my cart quickly, turning into the next aisle. And there he was, the man of my delusional fantasies.

Carson and an elderly gentleman holding a bag of brown sugar were talking. Keeping my distance, I used a stack of tinned beans as cover. It was embarrassing to admit, but the first thing I noticed was the crotch of his soft, faded blue jeans...snug fitting, faded blue jeans. After a moment of concentrated staring, I finally looked away and pretended to analyze a shelf of bottled spices. My hands trembled, and the only thing I could say was, *wow*. There I was, actually entertaining sexual thoughts about a man I hardly knew, a stranger. What kind of pervert hovers in the spice aisle at the grocery store, fantasizing about licking some stranger's cock?

The men parted company, and he strode in my direction. I didn't want him to spot me, so I yanked the cart back and crouched in behind, that way I'd be out of visual range. Have you ever had an itch you needed to scratch? That was how I felt. At the end, the temptation became too great, and just as I turned my head to take one last look, his gaze pierced mine. For that fraction of a second when we made visual contact, everything switched to slow motion—his body and my breathing—the fluid movement of his hard torso with each step. Talk about a gorgeous man!

He didn't stop, but his eyebrows rose in surprised recognition as he passed.

Little by little I stood up, wondering if I should follow, even say something like a normal human being would. The man was a dick magnet, and I was finding it increasingly difficult to control mine. But just as I mustered the nerve, he vanished.

"You're such an idiot," I grumbled in a sullen tone, shoving the cart. "The guy's straight, remember?"