A Contemporary Romance Novelette

by Meghan March

Chapter 1

"I've figured out your problem, John."

With the Miami skyline beyond him, John Farmer looked around the yacht as he laughed into the phone with his best friend and agent on the other end of the call. Bikini-clad models literally crawled all over the boat as they posed for photos.

"I wasn't aware I had a problem, Pete," he replied as he sat his Perrier down.

"Yeah, right. Tell that to the press. I know you, buddy. You're on the prowl for supermodel ex-wife number three, and I'm not going to fucking let it happen again. You're too good of a guy."

He tore his gaze away from the woman staring in his direction as his agent called him out on exactly what he'd been doing.

"Do you have a point?"

"You deserve real love, John. Actual love. Not another woman who wants you for your money, or your image, or what you can do for her career or social media following. And I've finally fucking figured out where you've gone wrong."

One of the scantily clad supermodels sat down next to him with a smile.

"I gotta go, Pete. Meet me tomorrow after cardio, before my massage. Then you can tell me what my problem is, okay?"

"Deal, buddy. You're gonna thank me. I promise."

John ended the call with a smile at the woman. “Hey, I’m John.”

“I know,” she said with a smile. “I’m Denise.”

“Nice to meet you, Denise.”

“Is this your yacht?”

“No.”

“Really?” she said with a pout. “I thought for sure you’d have a yacht.”

John didn’t bother to explain that his yacht was currently in the Med with his ex-wife and kids aboard, having a holiday on his dime.

“Sorry to disappoint.”

She shrugged. “I’m a Capricorn, I have 1.2 million followers, and I’m single.”

He lifted up his phone and stood. “Cool. I gotta make a call. Nice to meet you. Enjoy the party.”

As he walked away, he wondered what exactly his problem was, and he couldn’t wait for Pete to explain it to him.

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“Okay, you know how my wife’s into all the woo-woo stuff?” Pete started.

“Yeah …”

“Well, she keeps trying to get me to read these books, and I finally did, and, holy shit, John. I figured it out. I get it. I really, truly get you. I get your ex-wives. I get why you win. I get it.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. And I get why my marriage works, and why I’m rich as fuck, and why you’re looking in all the wrong places for love.”

John’s chest shook with laughter. “You’ve really got it all figured out, huh, Pete?”

“Dude. Mind-blowing. Also, why the country seems to be going to shit. Why kids are turning commie. It’s all obvious.”

John leaned forward and grabbed his water. “We should elect you president, bro.”

“Fuck that shit. But you gotta listen to me.”

“Tell me. Please. I’m dying to know.”

“How many supermodels have you dated?”

“Is that relevant?”

“How many would you trust to watch your kids for twenty-four hours?”

“None.”

“Exactly.”

“I don’t get it.”

“None of them were love in human form.”

John thought about it. Pete had a point. “Some of them were really cool though.”

“Right, but really cool isn’t what makes a relationship last, and while beauty and a smoking-hot body are appreciated, what you need is love.”

“Well, no shit.”

“But not the love you’re looking for, buddy.”

John rubbed his hand over his face and shook his head. “You lost me, Pete.”

“You’re looking for movie love. TV love. Attraction, lust, possession. That’s not real love.”

John got that. “Okay …”

“And what’s more, you need alignment.”

“What the fuck is alignment?”

“To have the same purpose as your partner. To be going the same direction in life. To have the same intention and goals.”

That clicked.

“Okay, love and alignment.” He sighed. “So, give up now, right?”

“No, because you don’t need to look for it. You just need to be it.”

John dropped his head onto the table between them. “What the fuck does that even mean, Pete?”

“Look, all you have to do is be love, and love will come to you. Automatically. You don’t even have to try.”

“I can’t believe we’re two straight men, having this conversation,” he said to the table.

“Believe it. Put out love. Be love. And you will attract love. Then you make sure you’re aligned. That’s your next wife. And a happy marriage that lasts.”

Pete made it sound so simple, but John was only half certain they were speaking the same language.

“Okay, say I do this—because I trust you, not because I understand what you’re saying—how would I start?”

“I knew you were going to ask that.” His agent grinned.

“Because you’ve known me for twenty years.”

“And because I know you really want a marriage like Angie and I have.”

Pete and Angie had the best marriage John had ever seen. Angie was always smiling. Always happy. Always kind.

That was when it clicked. She is love in human form.

“Wait, I just need my own Angie, don’t I?”

Pete tilted his head toward him. “She’s a unicorn, bro. Of course you need an Angie. But to get an Angie, you gotta be a unicorn too.”

John threw up both hands. “How am I not a unicorn and you are?”

“What would you do if I called you at two a.m. and asked you to talk to me about the meaning of life?”

“Ask you why you’re awake.”

“And what if I called you at five a.m. on a Sunday morning because my dog sitter had fallen through and I needed to leave for two weeks in ten minutes?”

“I only did that once, and I apologized for it. You loved Geopolis. He was the best dog ever. And you made twenty mil that year from my deals.”

“I didn’t watch your dog for the money, bro. I don’t do any of this for the money. I do it because I love you. Because I want the best for you. Because I always want to make life better for you, not make it more complicated. You see?”

John’s heart cracked. “Fuck. I wouldn’t have said yes if you called me and asked me to do it. I’m a selfish prick, aren’t I?”

“Sometimes. But you wouldn’t be who you are if you hadn’t been. But now … football’s done. You crushed every record you’d set out to crush. You’re as rich as King Midas ever was. You’ve got every material thing you could imagine … but you’re still miserable, bro. Why do you think that is?”

“Because both my wives have left me and I barely see my kids.”

“And why is that, John?”

“Because I’m a selfish fucking prick, Pete.”

“So, be love. Try something new. See what happens.”

John lifted his gaze to the ceiling. “That woo-woo shit really work?”

“Yeah, it really works.”

John swallowed. Talk about a wake-up call on a Friday morning.

He inhaled slowly as Pete rose, pushed in his chair, and met his gaze.

“I love you, man. You’re a good dude. You’ve always been a good dude. You’ve got a heart in there. Work on that for a while. The rest will fall into place.”

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