



LANIAKEA

The Convergence

R. GODROW
Book 1

LANIAKEA The Convergence

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Preface

LANIAKEA (“immense heaven” in Hawaiian) is composed of approximately 100,000 galaxies including the Milky Way, which contains our Solar System as well as the Earth. The red dot on the [picture](#) indicates the Milky Way.

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The author textually depicts elements such as landscapes, clothing, and places. He also sought to take advantage of the tools available through technology. In some volumes, he has included WEB links that make it easy to view the images. Just select the text in a different colour and underlined.

Those images were typically taken from a number of different websites. However, in all cases, there is no indication that their use is prohibited.

Some of these images are more or less explicit, while still being respectful of beauty.

Enjoy your reading!

1

On this early summer afternoon, the sun is shining on this beautiful city of Quebec. The first days of July are hot, but the wind keeps the pedestrians cool.

The intersection is very busy. The traffic light turns yellow. A man in his sixties stops his car. He is wearing dark blue pants, which are customary for his work as a consultant. His long-sleeved beige shirt has no creases. A few pedestrians cross the street in front of him. He glances at the sidewalk to his right and, among those waiting to cross the perpendicular lane, he spots the back of a tall woman. She is wearing a fitted white dress with large flowers on it, which lightly flows just above the knee. Her back, waist and buttocks are well defined. Her long, suntanned, muscular legs are straight.

She turns slowly to her left and reveals her profile. The small waves of her long dark hair with a few light-grey strands float gently in the breeze. Her forehead is long and bare. Her nose discreetly curls up. Her belly is quite flat. Her dress fits her chest well.

She looks to her left, across the street, waiting for the signal to cross.

The man behind the wheel takes off his sunglasses to better contemplate her. Thus, he can admire her light-blue almond-shaped eyes, her slightly open mouth which reveals perfectly white teeth and her round, barely elongated chin which completes the masterpiece.

He thinks:

She must be around fifty years old. What a wonderful, beautiful woman! Universe, be kind and let me meet her.

At one point, their eyes meet briefly and she discovers this man staring at her.

2

He takes his eyes off her to check the traffic light. His gaze is drawn further ahead. He sees a tractor trailer travelling in the opposite lane. Surprised, he wonders:

What the hell is he doing here?

He notices the top of the driver's head lying on the steering wheel.

Worried, he says to himself:

If he doesn't stop, he'll hit the pedestrians. He'll hit this beauty as well.

He looks at her and sees that she is moving her left leg forward as she gets ready to step off the sidewalk.

She mustn't go forward, he thinks.

He turns the steering wheel of his car to the right, accelerates quickly and then brakes just as fast to get between the truck and this beautiful woman.

He glances at the tractor trailer, which is still moving and is about to hit his car. He raises and bends his left arm to protect his head.

The truck hits his car pretty hard. The whole left side of the car is lifted. The car, pushed sideways towards the pedestrians, ends up stopping, blocked by the curb. The truck stays stuck to the car and continues to push.

✚ Ouch, he moans as he moves his left arm.

He looks and sees blood on the sleeve of his shirt.

Nervously he whispers:

✚ I have to get out of here, and fast.

He activates the roof window that takes forever to open. Somehow, he gets out and jumps on the hood to let himself slide to the right of the car, still being lifted by the tractor trailer.

On the sidewalk, he immediately notices his beauty lying on her back. Both her legs are under his car.

3

He gets closer. On his knees, he takes her right-hand and says in a reassuring voice:

✚ It's going to be all right! Don't worry! Trust me, I'll help you.

She tries in vain to look at her legs. In tears, she looks at him while trying to smile. She answers him:

✚ Thank you.

✚ Are you in pain? he asks delicately.

✚ My left leg hurts a lot.

✚ What about the right leg?

✚ I don't feel anything.

He leans over and tries to see her legs under the car. He asks her:

✚ I can't see your legs. Can I touch them? I want to know if they're hurt.

✚ It hurts, she says, still crying.

✚ Can I touch your legs? he insists.

✚ Yes. My left one really hurts.

✚ He grabs her right knee and moves it to the left and then to the right. It moves and she doesn't react.

✚ Your right leg seems to be fine, he concludes.

The left knee is pressed against the leaning car. He places his fingers on the side of the knee:

✚ I'm going to check under.

Quickly, he goes on:

✚ My hand is under the car, and I can touch your shin. I'm going lower.

He gently runs his finger along the tibia. When he touches a bump under her skin, she cries out in pain. He apologizes:

✚ I'm sorry. I'm almost done.

At the site of the fracture, he moves his fingers towards the calf to get under the leg. Then he withdraws his hand and looks at his fingers.

✚ There is no blood.

He moves closer to the head of this beautiful, suffering woman. He sits down on the sidewalk, takes her head between his hands, and gently lays it on his thigh. With his right-hand, he takes her hand.

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He asks those around him:

✚ Did anyone call for help?

Silence...

What idiots, he reflects angrily.

He picks up his phone and calls 911. An operator answers:

✚ You dialled 911. What is the emergency?

He replies nervously:

✚ Sir, we need the police and an ambulance. A truck hit my car, and a pedestrian's legs are trapped under my car. I checked and I think she's fractured her left tibia. I don't think it's an open fracture. There's no blood. I think the other leg is fine. But she's in a lot of pain. We are at the corner of Charest and Dorchester.

✚ I understand, sir. How's the pedestrian?

✚ How is the pedestrian? he repeats.

I just told him, he thinks to himself.

Then he looks at her and asks:

✚ How are you?

✚ My leg and my left arm hurt. Listen to me, I'm scared. I don't want to go to the hospital.

✚ Hold on, he says to the operator.

He puts the phone down and asks her:

✚ Let me look at your arm.

✚ Okay. Go slowly, please.

He bends over a little and extends his left arm to lift her arm. He feels a sharp pain. He winces, but doesn't want to moan.

✚ It's just a bruise. You fell on your arm.

He gently touches the spot with the fingers of his left hand. At one point, she moans as she tries to move her arm away. As he slowly sets her arm down and picks up his phone, he tells her:

✚ My name is Ethan. And you?

✚ I'm Kate... Ethan, I'm scared.

To reassure her, he says:

✚ Your arm doesn't look broken. What are you scared of?

✚ Going to the hospital. I'm afraid of hospitals.

✚ What if I go with you? Would that make you feel better?

✚ That is very kind, she says, looking at him with her beautiful pale blue, watery eyes.

✚ Okay, I'll stay with you. So, what do I tell the 911 operator who wants to know how you're doing?

✚ I don't know! I'm in pain.

He puts the phone to his ear and replies:

✚ Sir, it'll be okay, but hurry up.

✚ Stay on the line. I'll stay with you.

✚ I can hear the sound of many sirens in the distance. Is this for us?

✚ Yes. Now are you or the lady in any danger?

✚ Yes! My car is still being pushed by the truck. It might hit us.

✚ I'll tell the rescuers to go faster.

✚ I can see the police cars coming.

The operator concludes:

✚ Okay. I'll notify all the paramedics. I am going to leave you in the hands of the police.

5

✚ Two police cars arrive in a hurry. Two more arrive on the other side a few seconds later. A police team quickly approaches the scene of the accident to find out what is going on. One of them uses the radio that he is carrying on his left shoulder: 2042 at the corner of Charest and Dorchester. I need firefighters with the extrication clamps. I also need a second ambulance and a tow truck for a tractor trailer. This is an emergency.

Then he heads for the truck door. The other policeman stops him:

✚ What are you doing?

✚ I'm going to turn off the truck's engine.

✚ Bad idea! Nothing is moving, so we shouldn't touch anything. Quick! put blocks in front of the rear wheels of the truck. We have to stop it from moving. I'm going to help the wounded, if I can.

Six other policemen are taking care of traffic. The tractor trailer is blocking part of the intersection that has become chaotic with the intermingling of cars and pedestrians. The police officers have to restore order quickly to make room for help.

A policeman approaches Kate. In a reassuring tone, he says:

✚ It's going to be okay, Ma'am. The fire department is on its way. Listen, you can hear the siren. The ambulance will be here soon. We'll get you out of here.

He looks up at Ethan:

✚ We'll put a pillow under her head, and you're going to be able to step away.

Kate responds, panicked:

✚ There's no way he is leaving. I want him next to me. And also in the ambulance.

Ethan looks at her and reassures her:

✚ Kate, it's going to be okay. I'm staying here with you.

The police officer insists:

✚ Sir, you're going to have to step away, it's not safe here.

✚ Officer, I'm staying right here with Kate.

✚ It's your life! he says, resigned.

✚ Yes, it is my life, agrees Ethan.

The police officer delicately lays a blanket over Kate. Ethan grabs the nearest corner and gently wipes the tears from her cheeks. She looks him in the eye and gives him a little thank you smile.

6

Four firefighters arrive in their red truck. Quickly, they examine the situation. The lieutenant orders:

✚ First, we need to secure the car so that nothing moves. You know the procedure. Go! Go!

A firefighter immediately pulls up behind the tractor trailer. Two firefighters then pull the steel cable from the winch. They run the cable under the tractor trailer and attach it to the car. One firefighter returns to the winch. He stiffens the cable very slowly. The lieutenant whose hand is on Ethan's car is watching it closely. After sensing a very slight movement, he signals to stop. As he joins the other firefighters, the lieutenant says, relieved:

✚ This way, we can keep the car from running into the wounded.

The other firefighters install jacks so that the car does not move at all when the engine of the tractor trailer is turned off.

The lieutenant turns to the fireman next to him and says, in complete astonishment:

✚ This woman and this man, I don't understand how they're still alive.

The firefighters install the jacks carefully to ensure that the car is properly secured. Impatient, the lieutenant orders the driver of the fire truck:

🔧 Go and stop the engine of that damn trailer.

🔧 Lieutenant, if I do that, there's a risk that the front of the tractor trailer will drop down on the steel cable. It could drag the car, despite the jacks.

The lieutenant bends over to look under the truck. He gets up and concedes:

🔧 You're right. Hey, guys, we're gonna have to secure the tractor trailer too. We're gonna put three jacks up front, under the engine. It's not hard. We'll also have to stop it from backing up by placing blocks behind the wheels. Otherwise, the jacks will let go.

After securing the tractor trailer, a firefighter shuts off the engine. The driver is still inside, completely still. The lieutenant orders:

🔧 Now we're going to lift the car a little bit to get the lady's legs out of the way.

After analyzing the situation, two firefighters set the extrication clamps between the tilted car and the sidewalk. A firefighter operates the clamps very slowly, and the car starts to lift.

All of a sudden, Kate screams out in pain. Despite the injury to his arm, Ethan lays his left hand on her cheek. Then he gently presses her head against his chest. She moans in tears and squeezes Ethan's hand tightly. He lets out a shout:

🔧 Stop. Something's wrong.

The lieutenant gives the order:

✚ Check under the car. Be careful.

The firefighter crawls under the car and reports:

✚ There's a metal bar hanging off her left leg. I can fix it. Lower the car a millimetre.

It only takes a few seconds to push the bar and:

✚ Now you can lift it, slowly.

And then:

✚ Okay, that's enough now. Get her out.

Still holding her right-hand, Ethan moves out of the way to give the firemen some room. They gently ease Kate's legs and move her away from the car. A fireman is holding her left leg to avoid any kind of collision.

Two paramedics approach with a gurney. They gently place the victim on it. Ethan is still holding her hand. They approach the ambulance, place the gurney on a stronger stretcher and then attach a device to protect the fractured leg by securing it.

Once her pain has subsided a little, she tells the paramedic next to her:

✚ I want Ethan to come with me to the hospital.

✚ No problem, Madam. He has to go anyway, for his arm.

Surprised, she asks:

✚ What is wrong with his arm?

✚ During the accident, he injured his left arm.

She starts to cry again:

✚ Oh no. Is it serious?

✚ I don't think so. You have to stay calm.

Ethan wants to reassure her:

✚ Kate, it's not important. I'm going to be fine.

The policeman says to Ethan:

✚ Sir, I have a few questions for you.

✚ Officer, I don't mind, but I can't leave Kate and I need to get my arm checked. Can the questions wait?

- ✚ Not really, says the policeman firmly.
- ✚ Can you come to the hospital?
- ✚ We can do that.

In the ambulance, following the paramedic's instructions, Ethan sits on a bench, next to the stretcher, next to Kate's head. With his good arm, he takes Kate's hand from her belly and gently squeezes it. She responds by squeezing his fingers.

While the paramedic sets an IV, the dispatcher tells the driver which hospital is ready to receive the victims. The ambulance drives off quickly as the paramedic in the rear box makes sure that everything is under control.

He takes scissors to cut open the sleeve of Ethan's shirt. He then cuts from the wrist up. He examines Ethan's arm, which has a large bruise running along almost the entire length of his arm. He notices that the wounds are no longer bleeding, and asks him:

- ✚ Was it a hard blow?
- ✚ All I remember is that I used my arm to protect my head.
- ✚ I guess the car window was broken.
- ✚ Yes. It shattered into many pieces.
- ✚ I think you did the right thing protecting yourself. A blow like that to the head could have caused serious problems. Are you in any pain?
- ✚ Not too much.
- ✚ Take it easy now. At the hospital, they will take care of the pain.

Eventually, the paramedic takes the microphone and relates the situation to someone in the emergency room so that the necessary preparations can be done quickly.

During the ride, Ethan's hand stay locked with Kate's. Ethan looks at her and thinks:

The Universe has been kind to me. It let me meet her. Thank you for giving me the chance to know what love is. Now it's up to me not to waste this chance.

Fifteen minutes is all it takes for the ambulance to reach the emergency room.

The ambulance driver opens the back doors and asks Ethan:

🚑 Sir, could you leave the lady's hand and please get down?

Ethan reassures Kate:

🚑 Kate, I'm staying right here.

He gets up and heads towards the exit. He tries to lift his left arm and grab the safety bar, but he can't. A sharp pain shoots up his arm. He groans slightly while wincing and bends over so as to hide his pain. Kate can't see his face, but she hears his moan and sees him bending over.

🚑 Ethan, are you okay? she asks, crying.

🚑 It's going to be okay. I just need a few seconds to catch my breath.

Slowly, he gets up while holding his arm. His eyes are damp.

The paramedic gets in the box and helps Ethan down.

Then, both paramedics lower the stretcher and quickly transport it to the emergency room. They transfer her to another stretcher quickly and smoothly.

Kate cries out nervously:

✚ *Ethan, where are you?*

✚ *I am right here, beside you.*

✚ *Come closer and take my hand. You promised you wouldn't leave me, she is blaming him.*

✚ *I am right here, he says taking her hand and seeing panic on her face.*

He turns to the doctor and asks:

✚ *Could you give her a sedative or something? She's really scared.*

✚ *Who are you in relation to the patient, sir?*

Without thinking too much, he looks into Kate's eyes and replies:

✚ *I am her husband.*

Astonished, Kate looks at him and then she also smiles, to let him know that she agrees. Ethan moves his eyebrow slightly and nods to one side. All these small gestures calm her.

The doctor asks the attending nurse:

✚ *Give the patient an injection of 5 mg of morphine.*

Then he tells Kate:

✚ Madam, we have to separate you from your husband for a few minutes. We are going to have to take X-rays of your leg, and then we're coming back here. Your husband can't come. Anyway, I have to examine his arm and I have a strong feeling that the police over there are waiting to question him.

While the doctor is speaking, the morphine injection gradually takes effect. Kate feels an inner warmth invading her. Her eyes close for a few long seconds. She relishes the disappearance of her pain.

After nodding to the doctor, Ethan looks at Kate and says:

✚ Darling, trust the team of doctors. When they've finished the X-rays, we'll be together. As soon as I'm done with my arm and the police, I'll find you and we'll never leave each other's side. Okay?

✚ Okay, DARLING, she responds wryly with a smile.

And continues:

✚ Whew! The sedative is really working. You know, I like when you say, "We'll never leave each other's side." Someone takes her to the radiology department.

The doctor looks at Ethan's arm as the two police officers approach him. They tell the doctor:

✚ Doctor! We have to question this gentleman.

✚ I understand. Just give me a few minutes. I have to look at his arm, but it doesn't seem very serious. There's no fracture. We're going to clean this up, and then I'll have him put some antiseptic cream on it. Sir, can you take off your shirt?

Ethan tries to unbutton his shirt, but as he lifts his injured arm, he moans and winces. The doctor resumes:

✚ Stop. I'll just cut off your sleeve. A good painkiller will help you.

Turning to the police officers, he says:

✚ You can ask him your questions now.

The policemen ask Ethan what happened. Ethan recounts the events. One of the police officers makes sure he has it straight:

✚ You drove your car between the tractor trailer and the pedestrians, and the lady as well?

✚ Yes!

✚ You could have been killed.

✚ I know that, but at the time I didn't think anything of it. I had to do something, or she was going to die. As for me, there was a chance I'd survive.

✚ Yeah, how so?

✚ I had a car to protect me, but she didn't. The Universe was protecting me, and I had to protect her.

The police officers then stop trying to figure him out. One of them asks:

✚ Do you have your registration, driver's licence and insurance certificate?

He writes the information down on a form. Then he hands him the documents:

✚ There you go. I'm sorry to tell you, but your car is seriously damaged. In fact, it had to be taken for scrap metal. Here's the address. You're going to have to notify your insurer. We thank you for all your cooperation and wish you a speedy recovery.

A nurse hands a cup to Ethan. It contains a pain-killer. She also hands him a small cup of water. Ethan swallows the pill. The doctor finishes spreading the antiseptic cream and asks the nurse to bandage the arm. He instructs:

✚ Keep the bandage on for a few hours, after which you can remove it. It's better to leave the wound in the open.

✚ Can I take a shower?

✚ Not a problem. I'm going to prescribe you some anti-inflammatory cream, antibiotics and a sedative. In a week, everything will be fine.

✚ Thank you. Is Kate back?

✚ No, not yet. But she should be soon.

✚ Where can I wait for her without missing her return?

✚ There are chairs over there, he says, pointing. You can't miss her.

Ethan goes to sit down. He's starting to feel the day catch up to him and especially the stress he's been under. The elevators keep opening and closing, but at one point, Ethan sees a stretcher and Kate emerging from the elevators. He regains all his energy and moves closer to the stretcher. He asks her:

✚ How are you?

✚ Fine. The morphine is kicking in very well.

✚ They put you in a hospital gown? You are very pretty, I would even say radiant, but I swear I prefer you in your white floral dress.

✚ Ethan, I have a strange feeling.

✚ What?

✚ I feel like my husband is trying to be charming right now.

✚ Absolutely not.

✚ Absolutely false, she says, giving him an inquisitive look.

The orderly pushes the stretcher and closes the curtains. As he sets off, he says:

✚ It shouldn't take long.

✚ Kate, I'm looking at your fracture, and I can see it very clearly. The doctor is going to have to reset the bones.

✚ That's right, just scare me now. Stay by me!

✚ If the doctor lets me.

✚ There's no way you're leaving.

✚ Calm down. You saw, he's quite nice. And he took good care of my arm.

✚ Your arm! How is it?

✚ It's fine. It's been disinfected, and they gave me painkillers. The doctor prescribed some for a few days, that and other things.

As soon as he arrives, the doctor looks at the X-rays and says:

✚ Good. There is a small displaced fracture. I'll have to set it back in place, and then we'll put a cast.

✚ Is it going to hurt? I want Ethan to stay with me, she says.

✚ It's okay for him to stay. I'll give you local anesthesia for the pain in addition to the painkiller you've already taken.

Ethan lays his hand on Kate's shoulder. While the doctor sets up the injections around the fracture, Kate nervously grasps the sheet from the stretcher with both hands. Ethan reassures her:

✚ It's going to be okay. Just take deep breaths.

The doctor says:

✚ By the way, I overheard your husband being questioned by the police.

✚ Oh yes?

✚ He's a real hero. According to the police, he saved your life and the lives of the other pedestrians. All of you would have been crushed. It will certainly be on the news tonight. Well done, sir!

✚ Oh yes! So, I have my personal hero, my knight! she said, looking at Ethan mischievously.

✚ I was quite surprised when your husband said, “The Universe was protecting me and I had to protect her.”

Suddenly, the doctor pulls Kate’s foot in order to realign the two bones. She is startled and grabs the sheet. He gently sets her bones together and makes sure they’re properly aligned.

✚ Everything seems to be in place, but we’ll take another X-ray after the cast is put on, just to be sure. I don’t want there to be any complications.

He asks an attendant to set the cast.

✚ As soon as it’s done, I will come back.

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The attendant arrives with the supplies and prepares the leg. But as he begins working above her knee, Ethan asks him:

✚ What are you doing?

✚ I am getting ready to put a cast on her leg.

✚ Is it going to be above the knee?

✚ Yes!

In disagreement, Ethan replies:

✚ That's not okay. I want to talk to the doctor.

Please, hold on a minute.

Ethan goes to look for the doctor, and comes back with him. The doctor asks the attendant:

✚ Why are you starting above the knee?

✚ Because that's how we do it.

✚ Are you new here?

✚ Yes, Doctor.

✚ In this case, you start below the knee. Remember that she has to be able to walk. So, you'll need a heel under the cast.

✚ Okay, Doctor.

Ethan approaches the doctor and thanks him sincerely by giving him a good, firm handshake, but without a single word. Kate notices Ethan's eagerness and dedication.

Ethan comes back next to her and takes her hand.
Kate confesses:

✚ You know, Ethan, I'm very happy with the story of you being my husband and the way we keep calling each other "darling". I want to thank you, she says, squeezing his hand with both of hers.

Once the cast is set, they go back to the radiology department. Ethan does not leave her side except to wait outside the X-ray room. After a few minutes, the door opens and the radiology technician comes out pulling the stretcher:

✚ Someone will come and get you.

✚ Thank you very much, says Ethan.

Back in the emergency room, the doctor checks the X-rays. Then he hands Kate a piece of paper, saying:

✚ Here's a prescription for painkillers, antibiotics and anti-inflammatory drugs. Even if the cast is made for walking, try to take it easy for the next 4 or 5 days. Obviously, no showers. Good! everything is in order. If

you don't have any questions, a nurse will set you up with a wheelchair to take you outside. Good luck to you.

🚫 Thank you, Doctor, they both say.

Ethan says:

✚ Kate, you have to take off the gown and put your clothes back on. Thankfully, you were wearing a dress and not pants. I'm going to get a nurse to help you. I'd be happy to do it, but I have to take it easy on my arm.

✚ Yes, yes, yes. I'll take you up on your offer to get me a nurse.

✚ Don't forget to brush your hair; we'll have to go outside in style. Just picture it: "The saved and the hero." We'll be like "The beauty and the beast".

✚ So, you're also a poet! she says with a smile.

The nurse helps Kate get dressed and then draws the curtains. She brings in a wheelchair and helps Kate sit on it. With a strong push on the wheelchair, the nurse calls out to the other nurses and doctors pointing to Kate and Ethan with her index finger. There's a lot of applause. Even the other patients are applauding.

✚ Bravo to the heroes! shouts one person.

✚ Here is the hero, says Kate pointing Ethan.

Ethan kindly greets people. The nurse pushes the wheelchair to a taxi door and helps Kate get in.

In the taxi, Ethan suggests:

✚ We'll head to your house, and I will help you in. Then I'll get back in the cab and go to rent a car somewhere. But first I have to buy something to replace my shirt.

✚ That's right, you don't have a car anymore and your shirt is weird with only one sleeve.

✚ It'll be okay.

✚ No, we'll get my car. Can you drive manual?

✚ Yes. So, you have a manual clutch car?

✚ Yeah!

✚ It won't be easy for you with your cast.

✚ I know. I would even say it's impossible.

Kate gives the driver the address to her office.

Once there, she directs him to her car so that she does not have to walk too much.

✚ Kate, hold on a second, says Ethan.

He goes out, circles the taxi by the back and opens her door. Kate brings out her right leg and tries to do the same with her left.

✚ It's heavy and it hurts, she admits with a slight wince.

✚ Not like that. Bring your leg back inside. Now, you have to imagine that your buttocks are a pivot. So, lift both your legs at the same time and then, with your arms, pivot outward.

She does so with a little astonishment, then smiles when she realizes that his instructions got her out of the car successfully. Ethan leans towards her and holds out his two hands.

✚ Oh, ouch!

✚ Your arm? she asks.

✚ Yes, but I'll be fine. The pain medication I took in the hospital is starting to wear off. Well, I guess. But it's going to be okay. I'm gonna pull you slowly towards me.

She gets out of the taxi and puts her arms around Ethan's neck. As she does so, she offers him a gentle hug. After a few seconds of enjoying this moment between them, he asks:

✚ Where is your car?

- ✚ It's that one, pointing with her head.
- ✚ The Porsche?
- ✚ Yes, the Porsche.
- ✚ Are you serious?
- ✚ Why? A woman can't own a Porsche?
- ✚ That's not it. You'd let me drive your Porsche?
- ✚ Yes, why not? Let's go, she says, handing him her keys.

He gently helps her closer to her car, and puts her against it. He opens the passenger door and comes back to help her.

✚ Now, Kate, you do the opposite. You put your butt down and then you swivel.

✚ Okay the Man! I understood the concept, you know, she gently says.

✚ I have absolutely no doubt about it now.

She clings to the door and leans on the edge of the footboard in order to sit down and get her legs in. Ethan returns to the taxi and pays for the ride.

Once in the car Kate confesses:

✚ I need to take a shower. I don't know how I'm supposed not to get the cast wet.

✚ Just sit in your bath and keep your leg out of the tub.

✚ I don't have a bathtub.

✚ You don't have a bathtub!

✚ Well, no.

✚ You own a Porsche but you don't have a bathtub!

✚ I don't see the connection.

✚ In any case, it's too dangerous for you to be in the shower with one leg inside and the other outside. You could slip very easily.

✚ You're right. So, I have quite a problem!

✚ Do you know anyone who could help you? If not, I have two showers and one in the basement also has a bathtub. If you want, I can help you out. We'll have to go to your place and get some clothes, or we could use my laundry. After your bath, I could take you home. We'll have to do it quickly, though. I live on Île d'Orléans and the back and forth will take time. I am a little tired, you understand.

She looks at him, thinking, then says:

✚ Ethan, looking back on this entire day and especially how incredibly helpful you've been, I haven't forgotten how you risked your life to save mine.

✚ Yes, so what?

✚ You should know that I've never done this before, but I would like you to kiss me!

✚ Oh. And what kind of kiss do you want?

✚ That's up to you.

✚ Seriously?

✚ Yes. Do I have to ask twice?

✚ Certainly not.

He gets out of the car and quickly circles around it. He opens the passenger door and sits on the footboard. His right-hand moves towards Kate's cheek and gently caresses her with its fingertips. He then strokes her neck. Meanwhile, he slowly draws closer and lays several small kisses on her other cheek, slowly making his way towards her mouth. He gives her a few small kisses on the lips and carefully backs away, removing his hand from her cheek.

✚ I loved it; she admits. Do it again.

He moves closer, placing his hand on her shoulder to caress her arm. He nears her lips. When their lips touch, Kate exposes her tongue ever so slightly and caresses Ethan's lips. After a few seconds, she withdraws her tongue. Ethan does the exact same thing. Kate then brings out her tongue again to gently caress Ethan's. Then moving back a little, he cups her cheek and neck with his hand, and Kate, to show her delight, leans in. He looks at her and professes:

✚ You know I'm falling in love with you. In fact, I started falling in love with you when I saw you standing on the sidewalk. I saw how beautiful you looked. Everything about you fascinated me. Your eyes, your forehead,

your mouth, your butt, your belly, your entire body. And now, your sense of humour, your self-assurance, your fears, your smiles and your laughs. Well, everything except the crying. This, I can do without.

✚ Such wonderful words, thank you, but you didn't mention my breasts at all. You don't like them? she asks while looking down and giving him a mischievous smile.

✚ I haven't seen or touched them yet. It is hard to say.

✚ I find them a little small, she admits shyly.

He looks at her breasts and finally says:

✚ I don't. But I'll have to check closer.

✚ Let me know when you do.

✚ I have a weird feeling that you won't need me to tell you.

✚ Ethan, I am also falling in love with you. But please, we can't go too fast.

Gently, once again, they kiss. Then, caressing his cheek, she says:

✚ I'll take you up on your offer to help with the bath. If you want, we can go to my place and get a few things. I'll give you a sweater to replace your shirt. And I could sleep at your place tonight, that way you could get some rest. If you want to.

✚ Of course I do. I appreciate you wanting to take care of me and seeing to my rest.

✚ Ethan, you'll need a great deal of rest, she says as she leans her head to one side and gives him a naughty smile.

He goes back to the driver's seat and starts the car. He drives carefully, not taking advantage of the car's powerful engine. She points him in the direction of her home.

She lives on the sixteenth floor of an apartment building. He parks the car with the passenger door facing the entrance. He helps Kate by taking her hands and pulling her out of the car. His face reflects the pain in his arm. Kate, seeing this, puts her arms around his neck and hugs him tightly.

✚ You're sweet, but your arm is hurting?

✚ A little. We have to go to the pharmacy to get our prescriptions. You have one nearby, I suppose?

✚ It's in the building. If you want, can we go there before we go to my place? You can give them your prescription as well.

✚ It might be good for you, but I'm going to my pharmacy on the island.

Once in her apartment, she keeps using Ethan's shoulder for support as she slowly makes her way to the kitchen. She fills a glass of water and takes one of the pain-killers.

On the way to her bedroom, he notices a breath-taking view of the city. The overall decor is well thought out, without exaggeration. The apartment is sleek, just like its owner.

✚ Your home is very nice.

✚ Thank you. My bedroom is right here. I'm going to sit on the bed for a few minutes. I want to give the painkiller time to kick in. Can you take my carry-on bag that's in the closet, right there? she asks pointing at it.

Taking the carry-on luggage, he asks:

✚ I, too, will have a seat if I may.

✚ Of course. Come sit next to me.

✚ I do not want to be indiscreet, but tell me: do you often offer your bed to a man you just met on the very first day?

With a small punch on his thigh, she replies:

✚ Every day.

✚ I didn't think a woman as beautiful as you could be so violent. I'll have to be careful.

✚ You're right to be suspicious. Let's get going, she says as she stands and leans on Ethan's thigh.

They get to the dresser to take underwear. She admits:

✚ I'm a little embarrassed.

✚ Don't worry, I have some at home. They're for when I play dress-up.

Kate stops what she's doing and gives him a frown.

✚ It's a joke, he says, laughing heartily. I like that you're naive. I'll have to take advantage of that. Nice underwear! Don't forget that your panties are going to have to pass the cast test.

✚ It's a G-string. It will pass all the tests.

✚ Oh, yeah? What do you mean by all the tests?

Without answering his question, she asks him:

✚ Could you help me get to the closet to get a few things?

✚ Of course.

They slowly make their way to the closet.

✚ I'm not sure you can wear pants unless they are stretchy. I like you in a dress or skirt. Great legs have to be shown.

✚ Message received. And by the way, thank you for the whole cast-above-the-knee thing. Otherwise, it would have been hell. Lucky for me you were there.

✚ There are some debts that need to be paid on the spot. This is one of them, he says, as he leans in to kiss her.

👉 I understand, she replies. But the debt is more than you estimated.

And she kisses him with her tongue while pressing her entire body against his.

In the car, on the way to Ethan's house, they get to know each other a little bit better. Ethan asks her:

✚ Tell me a little about yourself.

✚ I have been divorced for many years. I am the VP, Vice-president of Accounting and Finance for a large Canadian financial investment firm with head-quartered in Montreal. I also run the branch in the city of Quebec, so I go to the head office quite often. I have a bachelor's degree in actuarial science and a master's degree in economics. I really love my job.

✚ Impressive, madam! In addition to being magnificently beautiful, you are intelligent and well-educated. That's quite rare.

She hits the top of his hand which is on the gear stick. He asks her:

✚ Don't you have kids?

✚ Why do you ask? I have a boy and a girl and each have a child of their own.

✚ I don't believe you. When I saw you on the sidewalk, I looked at your belly, which resembles a teenage girl's. I assumed that you didn't have any children.

✚ Exercise keeps a woman in shape. I have to admit, there's also a bit of genetics.

✚ And you're a grandmother! I can't believe that today, I kissed a grandmother.

✚ Yes, I am a grandmother. Besides, when we kissed, you didn't seem to hate it.

✚ I loved it.

✚ And you? she asks.

✚ You want to know if I have children.

✚ Yes. And so much more.

✚ I also have two kids. Two daughters each with one child. One of them is married to a neurosurgeon and the other to a guy who works in the government.

✚ Hello Grandpa. But I respect grandpas, you'll see.

✚ I am a freelance consultant going on a few decades now. Currently, my job is Strategic Consultant. I've had contracts in almost every field, like accounting, human resources, IT, etc. I have completed structuring and restructuring projects. I've also managed different types of projects. You should know that I like to build. I have a BA in accounting. I've also been divorced for several years.

✚ You have a full life.

🚧 Yes, but I have to tell you that I was missing something that I had never known. But I think I've found it recently.

🚧 What is it?

🚧 Love.

🚧 Oh!

After a few seconds of thinking, she confesses to him:

✚ Ethan, I have to tell you, I don't think I'm ever going to live with a man again. I've asked myself the question a number of times, and I always come to the same conclusion. I don't need that. I need to keep my privacy, and I'm fine with it. I'm sorry if that's what you're looking for.

✚ Don't be sorry. I'm thinking exactly like you. So, I understand very well. Fantastic! We already have something in common. Wow!

✚ Until now, I would say we have more than one thing, she responds smiling at him.

✚ Name another one.

✚ We like to kiss.

✚ You're damn right we do!

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Once on the island, Ethan parks the car in front of the pharmacy. He goes in alone to buy the medication prescribed by the doctor. He also buys her a Derby lacrosse stick. Back at the car, he gives her the cane and says:

✚ Here's a gift.

✚ It's great but it's too much. Are you trying to buy me?

✚ I want you to be independent and protect your leg.

✚ You are a sweetheart. Thanks.

He's driving the car to his place. He lives in a house sitting on a large lot with several trees. The land runs along the St. Lawrence River. It is set on the south side of the island where all kinds of ships and boats sail.

When they finally arrive, Kate notices a "House for Sale" sign beside the road. Ethan stops the car and points to the two ships about to cross each other:

✚ Kate, you're in luck. There is a freighter going up the river to the port of the city of Quebec or Montreal. Given its drag, I believe it is looking for merchandise. As

for the cruise ship, it's going down the river and turns back somewhere.

He moves the car forward so that Kate's door is level with the driveway leading to the entrance of the house. He asks her:

✚ Do you want to walk on the driveway slowly? Or I can bring you to the back of the house. It's shorter, but there are around eight steps to climb.

✚ I would prefer the driveway. The steps are not my forte right now.

✚ That's what I thought. Okay. I'll help you.

✚ Wait, let me try my gift.

✚ Okay! But let me get closer just in case.

✚ Okay!

Ethan gets out of the car holding Kate's carry-on. He moves towards her. She gets out of the car using the cane. Then they walk towards the front of the house.

✚ Ethan, this cane is really sweet. I owe you one.

✚ You are starting to owe me a lot.

✚ I know. I assume you're going to charge me interest?

✚ That's for sure.

As soon as she enters the house, she sees the river through the large glass panes lining the entire south wall. The floor is light-brown hardwood. She notices the furniture, the huge beam running from east to west and the supporting columns, all in dark brown wood. Kate says:

✚ The interior is very nice. It's beautiful and cozy. The view is simply sublime.

✚ Thank you! That's very kind of you.

✚ Why do you want to sell?

✚ Because I am getting older and I want to go to rent a place instead of owning it, so that I can have peace of mind about maintenance and all the upkeep a house needs.

✚ I get that.

✚ It's getting late, he says. I imagine you'll want to take a shower now. I also guess that you won't really want to go out to a restaurant after that. Let me see what I have. If nothing is appealing, I will go out to a restaurant to get something, but only after your shower. I want to be close to you just in case.

✚ Close to me! You want to watch me bathe?

✚ No! Just outside the door. But now that I think about it, that's not a bad idea.

Approaching the refrigerator, he asks her:

✚ Promise me that you will be completely honest.

✚ I promise!

He runs through the choices, and she decides.

Then they climb down the stairs to the basement. As she climbs down under Ethan's watchful gaze, she discovers a pool table.

✚ Do you play pool?

✚ I am completely awful. I'm not good at games, especially competitive ones. I don't know why.

✚ Great, we'll be able to make some bets.

✚ What kind of bets?

✚ We'll see.

After two seconds, she adds:

✚ We can alternate. I have a few ideas worth exploring.

As they approach the bath, she says:

✚ It's going to be all right.

✚ Can you do this?

✚ What a question! But just for kicks, tell me how.

✚ So, you just take off your panties and throw them somewhere.

✚ What?

✚ Listen all the way to the end.

✚ Okay! I'll shut up, she replies submissively.

✚ I'm going to have to start again, he says in a bossy voice. You just take off your panties and throw them anywhere. I won't look. When that's done, I'll help you get on the podium and you can get the right leg in the tub. I'll help you without looking. Then you'll sit upright on the edge of the bathtub. Now, it's going to be cold, but I am sure you could warm it up very quickly.

✚ What exactly are you saying about my ability to warm things up?

✚ You're not supposed to speak. I'll run the water to get the right temperature. Once that's done, I'll leave the room and close the door behind me. You will undress, and get in the bath with your leg on the edge and you

can do all the work. If there is anything you need, you'll call me and I'll be right here. Don't worry, I've seen a naked woman or two in my life.

✚ There you go, look who's bragging.

✚ Listen to me, promise you won't take any chances.

✚ Promise.

He leaves the room closing the door behind him.
Kate starts bathing.

After about fifteen minutes, she yells out:

✚ Ethan, don't come in, but what do I wear to come out? And besides, how do I get out of the bathtub?

✚ I have a woman's bathrobe upstairs. It's never been worn. I'll go get it.

✚ Okay, great.

He's back:

✚ How do I give it to you? I have to come in. I know, I'll use the bathrobe as a screen in front of my face so that I don't see you... Did I just say that! I don't believe it.

✚ Okay, she says with a laugh.

He opens the door and approaches the bath with the robe in front of him:

✚ I mustn't fall down. Two disabled people, it would be devastating. Here, he says, handing her the robe as planned.

Then he leaves the bathroom. After a few minutes, she calls out:

🚦 You're going to have to come back. I'm not able to get out of the bath alone.

He comes back and says:

🚦 Okay. Let's regroup. I'll get barefoot and sit upright along the edge of the bathtub, facing you. I'll put my left foot on your right foot so you don't slip. We'll hold our hands, and I'll pull you a little bit towards me. You lift your butt and sit on the edge of the tub in front of me. Then I'll stand up and help you get your right leg outside the tub, while you're still sitting. Then you could get up and walk down the step while I help you hold your balance. Once you're down, you can hug me and thank me. There you go. Fantastic planning, isn't it?

🚦 I see that you are an expert in planning! Shall we go?

🚦 Yes.

Once out of the bathroom:

🚦 You are really great, she says mockingly as she approaches him for a hug.

🚦 I know.

Still hugging him, she accuses him:

🚦 Pretentious!

Once at the top of the stairs, Ethan asks her:

🚦 We'll have supper and then you can choose a room downstairs and I'll go prepare it.

She puts her arms around his neck and replies:

✚ There's absolutely no way I'm sleeping downstairs.

Ethan responds:

✚ Me neither.

Kate gives him a kiss and concludes:

✚ See, we have many things in common. I told you so.

✚ They embrace each other with a long kiss and a reserved passion.

✚ You rest while I prepare the meal.

She replies:

✚ I want to help.

✚ No way, for three reasons. One, you're going to bother me. Two, you'll get tired and three, you're gonna be in pain.

✚ Okay boss! You decide.

Ethan turns on some soft music:

✚ Kate, do you like it?

✚ That's perfect.

He opens a bottle of wine and pours it into two glasses.

As they gently tap their glasses together, she looks at him in the eyes and says:

✚ Ethan, I wish you 10,000 pounds of happiness.

✚ Well, obviously it's already started.

✚ It started for me too, you know.

He sets the cutlery on the table and then starts cooking. Every once in a while, he looks at her and sees her admiring the river.

He serves the meal and asks her:

✚ It's almost time for the news. Do you mind if I turn the TV on for a few minutes?

✚ You can do what you want. It's your home. It could be interesting. They might talk about the accident.

Ethan turns off the music and turns on the TV. They start to eat slowly and the news starts. The news anchor begins:

✚ Today, at approximately 1 p.m., a truck driver lost his life while driving his vehicle. The cause is still unknown. The tractor trailer continued its driverless run in the heart of downtown Quebec, up to the intersection of Dorchester and Charest. According to witnesses, the tractor trailer was heading directly for pedestrians waiting to cross the street. In the opposite direction, a driver waiting for his green light anticipated the situation. He drove his car directly between the truck and the pedestrians. The truck slammed into the left side of his car and pushed it towards the sidewalk, eventually coming to a stop by the sidewalk. We have been informed that the car was completely wrecked. The driver managed to extricate himself through the opening of the roof. We are told that he sustained serious injuries to his left arm. According to witnesses, he managed to climb out of the roof with difficulties and went to help a woman who was hit by the car. This courageous man then called 911 while trying to reassure the woman whose legs were wedged under his car. Witnesses report that the woman suffered an injury to her left leg. She and the man were rushed by ambulance to the emergency. The man was holding her hand. We don't know if they knew each other. Later, one of our journalists interviewed the police officers who had gone to the hospital. The police officer told us on camera:

✚ This man knew he was risking his life, but he ran to protect the pedestrians. The investigation is still ongoing, but the evidence is clear: had he not driven his

car across the road, there would have been several deaths. At this moment, we believe 4 or 5 people would have been run over. I don't know who this man is, but I can tell you that he's a hero, a real hero.

Ethan turns off the TV. He sighs:

✚ And the problems begin.

✚ What do you mean?

✚ You'll see. When they find out who we are, they'll start coming.

✚ They will come for you. You are the hero.

✚ You believe that, and you are the one who was saved. You saw the whole thing. Besides, we went together, hand in hand, to the hospital, remember?

✚ Yeah! But you saved my life and the lives of those four other people.

No longer listening, he says:

✚ Damn it! Okay! We'll have to be ready. Damn it!

They eat slowly while considering the situation.

The doorbell rings.

✚ Don't move, he says. I hope it's not a journalist.

He goes to the door and opens it to see a journalist with his cameraman. With his hand, he waves them back and steps out. He suppresses his anger at being disturbed during suppertime:

✚ Do you know what time it is?

✚ Yes, sir. Sorry to bother.

The reporter brings the microphone closer to Ethan's mouth:

✚ Are you Ethan Miller?

✚ Yes.

✚ It was you who was in the accident downtown today?

✚ Yes.

✚ Can you tell us about it?

✚ Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you. I'm trying to keep my discomfort to myself. I am in the middle of supper. Today, I was in an accident, and then I had to go to the hospital. I am tired and I do not feel like talking right now. I would ask you to come back

tomorrow around 1 p.m. I will answer all your questions. Otherwise, there is no interview.

✚ I'm sorry, Mr. Miller. Can I ask if the Porsche in your backyard is Kate Jackson's?

✚ Yes. She can't drive her manual car because of her broken leg, and my car is scrapped. She let me drive it today.

✚ Does that mean that Ms. Jackson is here?

✚ Not necessarily, but yes.

✚ Did you two know each other before the accident?

✚ No. Now go away.

✚ One last question. Will Ms. Jackson be here for the interview tomorrow?

✚ I'm not sure, but I get the feeling that she will be, he says as he enters the house.

He turns around and asks:

✚ Please do me a favour. Tell your reporter friends not to bother us today.

✚ We will do that. See you tomorrow!

✚ See you tomorrow.

He comes back to the table:

✚ Damn it, we're not done. But it's all going to stop in a few days.

As he continues eating, he asks her:

✚ Do you like the food?

✚ It is delicious.

✚ Remember you promised to be honest.

✚ It's true, it's delicious.

✚ Tomorrow, will you stay with me for the interview?

✚ Yes.

✚ They're not dumb, you're here now and yesterday we didn't even know each other. I'll tell them that when I saw you standing on the sidewalk, it was love at first sight.

✚ Really?

✚ Yes. It's the truth, after all.

They finish their meal while listening to the music.

✚ Stay seated, he tells her while he clears the table. Then he cleans the kitchen counter and goes back to her.

🚦 Kate, if you don't mind, I'm going to take a shower. Hard day.

She gets up and comes closer to him. She wraps her arms around Ethan's waist and gently but firmly presses herself to him. She rests her head on his shoulder. He envelops her in his arms and gently embraces her. After a few seconds, she lets him go and says:

🚦 I'll be waiting for you in the living room while enjoying your music, this good wine and the view.

He takes a sedative so he doesn't have to worry about his arm. He removes the bandage and takes a well-deserved shower. He comes out wearing a men's bathrobe.

As he approaches her, she puts her glass on the living room table, gets up from the chair, lays her hands on his chest spreading open the bathrobe. As she stood up, the top of her bathrobe is slightly open to reveal part of her breasts.

He runs his fingers through her long hair as though he's combing it. He strokes her cheek, then brushes her neck with his fingernails. She shivers. Gently he leads her to the room.

She lies on her back, and he lies on his side. They caress each other's face, hair, neck. Ethan opens Kate's bathrobe a little more and frees one breast that he then caresses slowly by stroking the nipple with his fingers back and forth. Then he gently squeezes it by rolling his two fingers. Kate makes a moaning sound while arching her chest.

Slowly, she exposes her other breast, making it accessible to him. Ethan alternates between both breasts, caressing each one in turn and then slowly approaches her with his lips. She sees him moving closer and grabs his head to

guide him. He kisses and licks her breasts and then her nipples, which he sucks on delicately.

As he does so, he unties the belt of her bathrobe and slips his hand on her hip before moving on to her buttocks. She lifts her pelvis, revealing her pleasure and desire.

She puts her hand on Ethan's buttocks and draws him towards her. Ethan grabs her wrist and extends her arm over her head. Kate understands and she does the same with her other arm. She must give herself over to him.

Slowly, he comes back to her breasts. He licks each breast in turn and then moves up, running his tongue along her underarms.

👉 Ethan, I love that. Keep doing it. Yeah, um...

After a short while, he starts to slowly descend while stroking her belly, caressing her with one hand and then licking her flat belly.

He continues downwards, addressing each thigh in turn. He fondles the outside of her thighs, then the inside, kissing and licking everywhere.

He soon approaches her Mount of Venus, which is completely hairless. She opens her legs ever so slightly, while moaning. He enters her with two of his fingers, moving them back and forth and rubbing the wall of her vagina and paying particular attention to the G-spot. During this entire time, he is stroking her clitoris with his thumb. He keeps going until she reaches an intense orgasm. As she climaxes, he carries on caressing her and places his other hand on her belly and uses

his fingers to press just above her mount. Her orgasm lasts quite a long time.

After a few seconds, she catches her breath and gently pushes back Ethan's shoulder so he can lie on the bed. With her bathrobe entirely open, she crouches on the bed on top of him. She unties Ethan's belt. She opens his bathrobe completely.

She leans in towards Ethan's mouth. She kisses him, slowly licking his lips. She takes a few short stops to look at him. During one such pause, Ethan admits to her:

✚ I love it madly!

✚ I love it madly too, but don't talk.

She leans over him again and begins brushing her breasts against his chest. She pulls herself back a little to caress and kiss his chest. She licks his nipples. And she keeps going down. He can't see anything because of her hair.

She sees his raging excitement and likes it. She strokes his belly with the palm of her hand, kissing and licking him. Slowly, she presses on his belly and moves her hand to brush against his penis. She feels his great arousal. She stops:

✚ Ethan, let me ask you something. I really want you to come inside me. Right now, I really want you. But I want to keep torturing you. Just tell me: "I'm going to come!" and not at the very last second. And I'll get on top of you and take care of you. Okay?

✚ Yes!

Kate starts masturbating her target very slowly. She takes turns using her hands, her tongue, her mouth. From time to time, she looks at his face to see his arousal escalate.

With her other hand, she caresses his face, his lips and uses one finger to enter his mouth and stroke his tongue.

At some point, he moans:

✚ I'm going to come!

She straddles him and drives his penis into her vagina. She slowly rocks her entire upper body back and forth. She does circular movements with her pelvis. As she lies down on top of his chest, Ethan lets out a moan of pleasure signaling his imminent euphoria. She presses her arms and continues riding him with her pelvis. She sees him closing his eyes, his face changing. As she lifts her head, she comes at the same time. He opens his eyes and watches Kate orgasm. He gazes at her as he caresses her breasts.

She lies down on top of Ethan's body while still keeping him prisoner inside her. They stroke each other's hair in silence for several long minutes. She breaks the silence:

✚ I came twice. And right now, I can feel you inside me, even though we're not moving, I love it. These moments, I will never forget them.

Ethan gently admits to her:

✚ Now I know why they call this "making love". It's crazy, I never really loved life, but now, I'm afraid of losing it.

They both share a tender and lengthy kiss. Then she releases her prisoner and turns on her back to continue to savour the present moment.

Then, Ethan shares to her:

✚ There's something about me you should know. I have an issue. My lungs function at less than 50%. Today,

it went well because you were on top. If I had been on top, I would have run out of breath and we would've had to stop.

✚ I'm sorry to hear about your lungs, she answers. But it's quite clear that it only affects your breath. The rest is working marvellously well.

✚ You will have to be on top most of the time.

✚ I really like the idea of dominating you.

✚ Beware, this domination is in bed only.

✚ We will see about that, she replies.

They look at each other in this semi-darkness and, exhausted from the day, they fall asleep comfortably.

In the morning, he makes breakfast. In the meantime, he asks her:

✚ It would help me if you came with me to buy a car. If it's ready, you could drive it back here. We could go after the reporters leave.

✚ Drive back with it! We won't even take the afternoon to shop!

✚ Unlike the man you met last night, today you meet a man who is quite fast.

✚ Oh really? Now, if you'll agree, we could make a deal. I won't be able to drive my Porsche for the next two months. So, I'll lend you my car for the time being while you lend me your new one. That way, I'll be independent.

✚ That's fine. May I ask you a question that's a little personal?

✚ Sure.

✚ Seeing as you have a Porsche, what do you do in the winter?

✚ The engine of my other car blew up. I was waiting to get it fixed.

✚ I see. We'll have to notify our insurers that we are driving each other's cars temporarily.

✚ Good idea.

✚ I will also call work to tell them that I will take the rest of the week off.

✚ I'll do the same, she says.

They go to the bedroom to get dressed. Her tight-fitting blue-patterned pants perfectly define her lower body, not taking into account the bump of her cast. A white silk blouse with a black lace collar and a modest neckline reveals a sexy bra. She asks:

✚ So, now that you've seen my breasts and done pretty much everything you can do to them, how do you find them? Small?

✚ You don't have big breasts, but they are, let's say, respectable. That being said, there are a few important considerations. First of all, I don't like big breasts. I prefer smaller breasts. Also, a respectable pair of breasts like yours hardly sags with age. This somewhat negates Isaac Newton's law on universal attraction.

✚ Universal attraction?

✚ Gravity.

✚ Mr. Miller flaunts his knowledge of science.

✚ But the most important thing about your breasts is that they speak.

✚ What do you mean "They speak"?

✚ Well, when I fondle, caress or kiss them, your nipples get hard. They let me know you like it.

✚ You're completely insane and I love it.

✚ Look, you're beautiful. Your pants shape your two buttocks beautifully. I'm going to have to stay behind you all day.

✚ Voyeur!

✚ Yeah!

✚ We're coming back here, tonight?

✚ No, I want to entertain you.

✚ Do you have two dressing gowns?

✚ No.

✚ Then you can't entertain me. I'm kidding! I think that for a few days you should take it easy and stay at my place.

✚ You're going to let me take it easy. I'm not so sure, she says, looking outside. Ethan, we have to deal with the reporters. They're coming.

Ethan says, opening the door:

✚ Ladies first.

Kate goes outside, and he whispers:

✚ Remember, I'm right behind you.

✚ I know, but come next to me. Otherwise you'll get too excited and we won't be able to go buy your new car.

After the usual greetings, the reporter starts the interview:

✚ Mr. Miller, we've obtained details from the police. The driver of the tractor trailer was probably dead when he hit you. How did you feel at the time of the impact?

✚ Actually, I had just noticed Kate standing on the sidewalk and I was thinking about her when I realized what was happening. I was afraid for her. You know when you see such a beauty, you want to be there for her.

✚ What about the other pedestrians, did you think about them?

✚ Yes, but not much. Kate was up front. If she had been standing behind the others, I probably wouldn't have noticed her.

✚ Would you have done the same?

✚ Ask God, but I do not know if he knows the answer.

✚ I guess you're right. Please go on.

✚ In the car when I saw the truck coming towards me, the only thing I thought was to protect my head. I

knew it was going to hit me hard. My window was closed. It's always closed.

✚ Once you stopped, what did you do?

✚ I looked to the left and saw that the front of the truck was wrecked. Then I looked to the right. I could see the pedestrians without seeing their faces. I couldn't see Kate's dress. I got worried. Then I told myself that I had to get out of there fast. That's when I opened the window of my roof.

✚ At what point did you know that your left arm was injured?

✚ When I stretched out my arms to get out through the roof. I couldn't lift it. I looked and saw blood on my sleeve. I felt my bones and there didn't seem to be any fractures. I only had one arm and my legs to climb, but I made it.

✚ You found Ms. Jackson on the ground?

✚ At first, I saw that she was moving. Soon, I saw that her legs were trapped under my car which was on the side. I assumed the car was on top of her legs. I was afraid that she was bleeding. I looked under the car, but I couldn't see anything. She said her left leg hurt.

✚ What did you do then?

✚ I took her right knee and moved it. She didn't react. Then I touched her left leg, from the knee to the ankle to see if it was wet. She felt a discomfort when I touched her fracture. After removing my hand, I saw that there was no blood.

✚ And then?

✚ Then I sat on the sidewalk and put her head on my thigh, so that she wasn't too uncomfortable. She was very nervous. I took her hand and told her about the fracture to her leg, but the good news is that the fracture wasn't open.

The journalist asked:

✚ Ms. Jackson, do you remember when the car hit you?

✚ Not really. I was looking at the ground because I was about to step off the sidewalk. All of a sudden, all I saw was grey. That's the colour of Ethan's car.

✚ So then what happened?

✚ I felt a sharp pain in my leg, and I fell to the left. Once on the ground, I saw that the car was leaning towards me. I was really scared. I thought: *What if it falls on me?* That's when Ethan came and took care of me.

✚ Mr. Miller, when you were next to her, did you think that the car would continue in its path and fall on you?

✚ Yes, but nothing was moving.

✚ What if the car had moved?

✚ Look, you can imagine any scenario. But I wouldn't have had time to run unless the car was moving very slowly. Also, it wasn't really an option for me to leave her there and get the hell out. All I could think about was protecting her.

✚ Ms. Jackson, I was told that you didn't want him to leave your side, but a few minutes prior to the

accident, you didn't even know Mr. Miller. How do you explain that?

✚ What can I say? I had noticed that he was watching me at the red light. I found that flattering. On the ground, I was frightened. Afraid of everything. I was scared and really hurting. After what he had just done, his presence reassured me. I don't know why, but he calmed me down without really speaking to me. He was holding my hand. Maybe that's it. He placed my head gently on him. That also reassured me. At one point, I told him that I was afraid to go to the hospital. I remember him calling for help. Then he offered to take me to the hospital to comfort me. I saw that he had a great deal of empathy, selflessness and dedication, so I accepted. But I don't think I would have been able to let go of his hand anyway.

✚ Before I came and met you last night during supper, and I apologize for that, I spoke to the doctor who treated you. At some point, he said that you were married. But yesterday, you did not know each other, so you weren't married. Why would you say that?

Kate answers by pointing to Ethan:

✚ He said it. He's the culprit.

Ethan then responds:

✚ First of all, I want to apologize to the doctor who, and let me be loud and clear, was fantastic. I just said that because I wanted to stay with Kate for two reasons. One, I promised her. And two, I liked being next to her, taking her hand, her arm and looking at her.

✚ So, if I understand correctly, you took advantage of me, she says with a smile.

Ethan, while returning her delicate smile, takes the floor again by addressing the journalist:

✚ On that note, I believe the interview is over.

The reporter shakes their hand:

✚ Thank you for all your generosity.

Ethan responds:

✚ And I thank you for being respectful of our privacy.

Moving away from the journalist, Kate points out:

✚ Ethan, you didn't answer the last question.

✚ It's true! It does not concern anyone.

✚ I understand and agree. But you really stopped the interview.

✚ True! I didn't want to give him the chance to dig deeper into our privacy.

✚ Phew! Let's go buy your car. Let's go buy your car. I can't wait to see if you'll do as well as you did for the interview.

✚ Sure!

They get into the Porsche and drive away from the reporter and cameraman finishing to put away the equipment.

✚ Since you are staying at my house for a while, we should go to your place and pack a suitcase for 4 or 5 days.

✚ Good idea.

While Kate prepares her suitcase, Ethan goes on the balcony to enjoy the view. On his return, after a few minutes of silence, she comes near him, hugs him and says:

✚ Ethan, I can't believe it. We only met yesterday. Then, we made love and it was wonderful. Today we're together and it is as if we've known each other for years. It feels so good. It seems that we are made for each other.

✚ Kate, I have a profound belief that we are all cogs in a gigantic gear that makes up the Universe. I am truly convinced that the Universe brought our two cog-wheels together and that their teeth fit perfectly into one another.

✚ Do you believe in destiny, in God?

✚ I believe that God is the Universe. Since everything is part of the universe and helps create it, then we too are part of the Universe. Our cogs are part of the work of the Universe, of God.

✚ So, we should avoid putting sand in it, she says while kissing him.

She goes on to say:

✚ And I love your vision of the Universe and of God.

They go to the scrap yard to pick up his old licence plate. Then they set off, straight to the dealer where he purchased his previous car.

✚ Kate, look at the master go, he brags.

At the sale desk, he asks:

✚ Is Andre Dupuis here?

✚ Yes, sir. He is.

The salesman approaches, reaching out his hand:

✚ Good Afternoon, Mr. Miller.

✚ Good afternoon. I need another car right now.

Here is my old licence plate.

✚ Do you want the same car?

✚ About.

✚ I have one that is almost ready, but it's a little more luxurious than your previous car.

✚ How much more?

✚ \$7,500

✚ What colour is it?

✚ Gold. Look right in front of you, in the window.

✚ That's great. Tell me where to sign.

✚ Please follow me to my office.

✚ Do you need financing?

✚ No. I'll write a cheque.

✚ Perfect. Have a seat.

He completes the paperwork and has him sign every so often. Ethan writes out a cheque and gives it to the salesman.

On their way to the car, she asks him:

✚ You paid cash?

✚ Yes, my insurance is covering almost everything.

Kate drives his new car, and Ethan takes her Porsche. Once home, Kate says to him:

✚ You won't get any credit for buying a car in a matter of minutes. You knew the dealership and the salesman. Even worse, you would have bought anything, just to be right. Your pride's going to destroy you one day. So, you have to admit that you cheated.

He takes her hands with a broad and almost indecent smile. After a few seconds of satisfaction, he resolves to admit:

✚ When you say that I cheated, you're much more right than you know. But not for the reasons you think. The truth is, I called the salesman while you were packing your suitcase. We determined everything and he reserved the car for me. I told him to pretend we never spoke. I wanted to trick you a little bit. He played the game very well.

✚ I'm so naive! In my defence, your plan was... And I hesitate to say it... just perfect.

✚ Being naive is a tiny little flaw that just makes your perfection even more perfect.

✚ Whew, flattery on top of that. I wonder what exactly it is you're looking for.

She hugs and kisses him.

She sits down and, holding her cast, she moves it back and forth to scratch herself:

✚ Ethan, it itches like hell under the cast.

✚ Stop it, you're going to hurt yourself. I have an idea.

✚ Do you? she says as she opens her eyes wide.

✚ Yeah!

He goes to get a cordless vacuum cleaner. The air outlet can act like a blower. While he carefully cleans the vacuum, he explains:

✚ You don't want any dust between the cast and your skin.

Then he goes outside and runs the machine. He hits the nozzle on the balcony floor. When he returns, he hands it to her and she uses the thinnest nozzle all around her leg, she lets out a long sigh of relief. She lifts her head, closes her eyes and says:

✚ Ahhhhh. Still my saviour. I am very happy to be back here with you. At home, I wouldn't know what to do.

👉 You look as if you're about to come just by using the vacuum cleaner.

👉 I swear I am close. Let's keep it handy, all right?

👉 Okay, so I use it tonight?

👉 We won't need it. I can guarantee you that.

Over the next five days, they have a lot of fun. The music is always there. Ethan prepares meals for Kate to rest her leg. They drive around enjoying the scenery. From time to time, they stop and walk side by side to join a bench and cuddle like teenagers.

On the morning of the third day, they bask in bed caressing each other slowly and tenderly.

✚ Ethan, I didn't know we could just lie down, hug and caress each other, without it going further.

✚ I call it tenderness.

✚ Yes, it is tenderness and it's great, very affectionate and I love it!

✚ You know, for me, making tenderness is making love without the sex. Making sex is making love without any love. And making love is doing everything.

✚ I will remember that.

On the fifth day, as Kate returns from shopping, she pulls \$20 in change from her purse, and tells him:

✚ You owe me \$10.

✚ Why?

✚ Here are ten one-dollar coins.

✚ Why?

✚ Because we're going to play pool and it's one dollar per game.

✚ Oh boy! I'm going to go broke.

✚ Shall we head downstairs?

✚ Yeah, okay, he says submissively.

✚ Heads or tails to see who breaks.

✚ Tails, he chooses.

She flips the coin in the air and catches it in its fall.

✚ Heads, I break.

✚ So, it begins, he says in a discouraged tone.

He loses one game and then another. For the third face-off, he gathers the balls in the triangle and Kate suggests:

✚ I don't want to steal all your money in one day. So, what if we bet something else?

✚ I'm going to lose anyway.

Deal! so the loser gives the winner a massage with the massage oil I bought today at the sex shop.

You went to an erotic store alone?

Yes.

Don't ever do that again. If you ever go back there, it'll be with me.

Oops! I promise. Now, will you take the bet?

Do I have a choice?

No.

Ethan loses the game.

You're going to have to pay. I'm going to lie on the bed.

She lays on her stomach on a large towel, completely naked. He kneels beside her. He pours some oil, on the one hand, and rubs his hands together, warming the oil. He starts massaging her shoulders slowly for a few minutes. He moves slowly down to her waist and then up again. He moves on to her feet then proceeds upwards, spreading her legs as he does so. He takes great care to put oil all over her calves, thighs and the area between her thighs then applies it on her buttocks and the area in between. He goes back down to her feet and gently orders her:

Turn around.

He moves up, over her. He massages her shoulders and, as he leans back, his hands slowly fall lower, still covering her with oil. He massages her breasts and stomach for several minutes. Then, as he massages her thighs, she spreads open her legs to give him access to her sex. He massages her whole

sex and keeps his fingers on her clitoris. She arches and orgasms with great intensity.

He stops massaging her and just keeps his hand on her sex, motionless.

After a few minutes, she tells him:

✚ Stand up. It's your turn.

He stands up in front of her. She lowers his pants and takes great pleasure in making him come, watching his face all the while.

A little later, she tells him:

✚ I love making love to you; even the sex is not unpleasant either.

✚ My intuition tells me that we'll be using the pool table again.

✚ You can count on it. I like to win, to dominate.

✚ When we make love, you are always on top because of my lungs. You dominate me every time. Isn't that enough for you?

✚ No. When we make love, you have no choice. Playing pool, you have a chance to be on top.

✚ I have no chance, I suck.

✚ That's your problem.

✚ Now we see who's the boss.

✚ Let me be clear: Vice-president.

✚ My bad!

✚ Ethan, I loved it.

✚ Me too.

The next day, Kate is about to return home and then go back to work. Ethan, for his part, will return to his client to continue his contract. Before leaving, Kate fulminates by putting on her pants:

✚ That damn plaster!

Ethan looks at the bump on his leg and says:

✚ Now, listen. In about two months, the cast will come off. I suggest that on that day, we go out for supper at a nice restaurant. You will dress sexy. Then, if we feel like it, we'll make love all night long because we'll be off the next day. What do you think about that?

✚ I would love it.

✚ Perfect. I'll arrange it.

Over the next two months, they see each other often. Ethan gets to know Kate's children and grandchildren. Their kids' spouses are also there. Kate gets to meet only Ethan's second daughter, her husband and her son.

One day, while they're having supper at a restaurant, Kate asks him:

✚ I'm curious to know why you and your eldest daughter aren't speaking to each other.

✚ It's not an interesting story.

✚ I'd like to hear it.

✚ Are you sure you want to?

✚ Yes. I want to know, but if you don't want to talk about it, I understand.

He ponders for a moment while contemplating her light-blue eyes staring back at him.

✚ Kate, I could lose myself in your stunning eyes.

He stands above the table and steals a short, sweet kiss from her lips.

✚ To get the full story, I have to start far back. I'll tell you about it... For the first five years of her life, my daughter was an only child. At home, she was the Queen. And at the age of six, her sister came into the world. She lost her throne.

✚ It must have been more difficult than in other families due to the age gap.

✚ Yes, quite. My ex-mother-in-law came to help at home, as she had done with our eldest daughter. The house was typical with one floor and three bedrooms. So, as you can see, there were five people living in the house, including one couple. We were already one room short.

He takes a break. And continues:

✚ A few days after the birth, my own mother committed suicide.

✚ Oh no! How did it happen?

✚ It really doesn't matter how it happened.

✚ Ethan, I'm so sorry.

He takes a sip of wine...

✚ My father, filled with despair, came to live with us. You have to know that he was in bad shape for quite some time. Everything surrounding the birth of my second daughter was a living hell. My father used my ex-mother-in-law as his personal servant, seeing as he had just lost his. And she would order my eldest daughter around. They argued very often. This lasted a few months. As for me, I was overworked, but couldn't show it.

He takes a break:

✚ One day, at the end of winter, it had started snowing some very big snowflakes, without any wind.

Like leaves swaying slowly from left to right, he says as he makes a similar gesture with his hand.

He goes on:

🚦 I watched the snow through a window at work. It was mid-afternoon. I called my ex-wife and told her to get ready; we were going skiing. I got home, changed clothes and then we headed to a ski resort. At the reception desk of the resort, we were told that if we bought tickets at that moment, we would have less than one hour left to ski. The ticket was only for the afternoon. We decided to leave the resort and come back some other time. So, we got in my car and started driving. While in the parking lot, a car hit us violently from the front, on the passenger side. Even worse, due to the ice that was on the ground, the car swerved back and hit us in the back, on the right side. Great, right? The same car hit us twice. What bad luck!

He drinks some wine, and then continues:

🚦 My car got towed and we went home in a taxi. When we got there, after recounting the story, I went to lie down in bed with the door closed. My ex-wife came in and found me. She sat next to me and asked me what I was going to do. I said I wanted to get some sleep. She said she wanted to go to sleep as well. When she told me that, I realized in that moment that we both wanted the thread of life to stop. So, I looked outside and I saw that the big snowflakes were still falling. The street lights lit them up very well. And then, overcome with anger, I

said, "There's no way we're missing this. We have to go back." She asked me what car I was planning to use and I answered that I'd drive my father's. She told me that he'd never agree and, still angry, I told her that I simply didn't care. We went back to the resort. I remember it well, how I took the individual ski lift, placed it between my legs, sitting there as it started to move forward, and still these big snowflakes were falling slowly all around me. The climb was really magical. It seemed like the higher I climbed the mountain, the more energy I had. When I reached the top, I had my full energy back and wanted to live. I was ready to go for it.

He continues after taking a short break:

✚ By spring, the atmosphere at home was so unbearable that we asked a couple-friends of ours to babysit our eldest daughter. They agreed to it. They had a boy the same age, and the two kids got along. I was the one to drive her alone. This friend of mine, a physicist, asked me how long it would be. I told him that I didn't know.

✚ I think I see where you're going with this, says Kate in a sad voice. Go on, will you?

✚ On the way back, in a remote little place, I parked my car to think. I told myself that none of this made any sense. People were coming to my house, and I had to get my own family out. It didn't make any sense to me. I had to fix it. I didn't know what I'd do, but I

had to do something. I think my brain was working in slow motion, really.

After taking a sip of wine, he continues:

✚ A few days later, I met up with a cousin. Without knowing my exact situation, he told me that except for my wife, everyone will be against me. Kate, he was so right.

✚ It's so sad.

✚ I realized that I needed at least one or two allies. So, I went to see my sister and her boyfriend, to explain the situation. Both of them were supportive. I had a social worker meet my father and explain that he had to leave my house, and that my sister and I would find him a place for semi-independent people that he would like. He refused. He couldn't see the damage he was doing.

✚ It wasn't his fault. His intentions weren't bad.

✚ You are right, but the damage was done. My sister and I found two places that we showed him and asked him to choose one. He refused to decide. So, we chose for him and moved him. I asked my ex-mother-in-law to move back home, and I went to get my daughter.

He pauses and then continues:

✚ I never realized that all the damage that was done would gradually fester over time. I didn't realize it. I couldn't foresee the consequences.

✚ It's not easy.

✚ The years that followed saw my eldest daughter rebel against any authority, against her parents but especially against me. No matter what I said to her, she did what she wanted. So from time and time, I had to spank her on the butt, of course. Given her constant rebellion, I even thought of taking her to youth protection services and put her in foster care.

✚ The situation was that bad?

✚ Yes. But that would have been a mistake and I would have suffered the collateral effects.

He stops and takes a good long sip of wine... Then a second, more reasonable sip.

✚ You can stop if you want to.

✚ No! I'll just finish setting the table and I'll continue. My daughter was like this for a few years, and she got even worse as a teenager. Somewhere along the way, I decided to stop caring, to isolate my feelings from her. One day, I told her that the idiots that she was dating with earrings all over the place, including in their nose, were no longer welcome in my house. More than that, I said that if she continued this behaviour, I'd kick her out of the house, even if she wasn't 18 yet. She calmed down a little and her stupid friends stopped coming over. Some time later, my ex-wife and I moved to Montreal, because that's where I found some great contracts. As for her, she stayed in the city of Quebec. She dated a guy and had a child with him. Later on, they broke up and she dated someone else, her current partner.

He stops for a few seconds and goes on:

✚ A few years went by. We saw each other from time to time. One day, as I was coming back from work in the city of Quebec, my ex-wife called and told me that my daughter wanted to talk to me and that I

should go to her house. Which I did. I found her in tears. Her partner greeted me. She worked in a department for the Quebec government. She told me she had problems with two of her bosses, who had complained to human resources. Kate, I had never been a unionized, unlike her spouse, who didn't say a word. I am sure that he was angry that his girlfriend, who was over 37 years old, called her father for help instead of going to him. I think that on that day, he had to choose between his girlfriend or her old man. He chose to simply get rid of the old man. So, he came up with a treacherous and devious plan to get rid of me. I'm sorry, says Kate sadly.

🚧 Don't be. I am who I am because of all that, all my past. Now, I'm in front of a wonderful woman whom I love to watch, with whom I love spending time, talking, eating, making love. All that shit in my life allowed me to meet you and I sincerely hope that our relationship will last a very long time.

He takes a sip of wine:

🚩 One day, she had a complete burnout which lasted several months. Her employer at that time wanted to end her sick leave and forced her to see a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist brought her back to her past, which she had laid to rest. She remembered the spankings without obviously saying why, I guess. He tells her that I'm a violent man. She believes that, I think because she wants to get over her depression. It's easier to blame someone else. I am sure her partner maliciously supported her decision to stop talking to me. It helped his plan. I call him a pimp because he uses the same strategy, to isolate his victim from their family and friends. He has completely isolated her from her family, from me, and he barely tolerates her sister. As for her mother's side of the family, I would say they've broken off about 90%. He is a "pimp" and she's brainwashed.

He takes a sip of wine and continues:

✚ I am almost done. One day, for New Year's, I invited her, by email, to a restaurant for supper. It was only for her, her sister and me. She refused. She wrote to me, "Thank you for the invitation, but it isn't possible for us." I didn't invite her "pimp". This was the end of any type of relationship and any type of heritage. Finally, I want you to know that soon after that, I also ended up looking through a few of my own skeletons. What I remembered about her made me realize that not seeing her wasn't really a great loss. Quite the opposite, in fact.

✚ Despite what you may say, Ethan, I wish you had a better relationship. You may, someday.

✚ Kate, let me quote an American abolitionist woman from the 1800s, [Harriet Beecher Stowe](#): "The bitterest tears shed over graves are for words left unsaid and deeds left undone."

✚ What an amazing truth! Of course, this applies to her, but Ethan, you must realize that it applies to you as well.

✚ You're absolutely right, and that is why, if it ever happens, I will not cry on her grave.

✚ Ethan, this makes me so sad.

✚ I've spoken enough about it, and I think I have to put the past to rest and focus on the present and even

a little on the future. I want to focus on you, and the beautiful memories we are making together.

🚦 Ethan, what you said is so nice. I'm with you.

🚦 So, how was your day?

She recounts funny, light things that happened to her.

After their meal, next to their cars, they say good-bye to each other with a big, long hug and a kiss.

For the next few weeks, they go shopping together on Saturday mornings, and meet on occasion. One day, he tells her:

✚ Kate, listen. We don't see each other very often during the week. You have to manage your branch, and you go to Montreal regularly.

✚ That's right.

✚ And when I'm working, my days are very busy. Clients expect this of me, considering they are paying a high level of strategy.

✚ Okay.

✚ We go shopping on Saturday mornings and then meet up. On Sundays, we spend some time together, but we each go home and go to sleep early to be in shape the next morning. We spend only one night together per week. It's too condensed. It's even stressful. If we plan to no longer work on Friday afternoons, we can do our shopping. That way, our weekends would be more relaxed. We can even go for supper together on Fridays,

without any stress. We can also spend the night together and even make love.

✚ That sounds like a great idea, she admits. I'll arrange it at work.

He goes on to say:

✚ When the weather is nice, you can come to the Island. In the evening, we can start a fire in the open-air. We'll have a good glass of wine, and we'll admire the scenery. Usually, when there are no clouds, the moon's beams are reflected on the river. We can see the beauty of nature. We can see the huge boats sailing past, more or less slowly. You know, it's been years since I've taken the time for all this. Before my divorce, everything was bad, and after, I was alone. Evenings like these have to be shared.

✚ Your offer is quite attractive.

The following Friday afternoon, they take care of their shopping and end up on the island. They cook a good meal. On Saturday night, it's cloudy and Ethan asks:

✚ It's raining, so there can be no fire. What would you like to do?

✚ Shall we play a game of pool or two?

✚ Whew! It's going to be a tough night.

✚ Tough! I'm counting on it.

The next day is quite sunny. While he mows the lawn with his tractor, she watches a few sailboats sail away in the wind. When he nears her, she signals him to stop. He turns off the engine.

✚ Can you let me mow? Hmm?

✚ Listen here. A real man doesn't lend his tractor.

✚ I get it. Just like a real woman doesn't lend her Porsche.

✚ Precisely.

He steps down from the tractor smiling. He explains the handling to her.

✚ Get on, I'll help you.

✚ Kate puts her right foot on the step. She grabs the steering wheel to hoist herself. Ethan takes her by the waist to help her. She brings her left leg to the other side and sits down.

Pointing at the sailboats, she asks him:

✚ I'd like to go sailing with you. I've never done that.

✚ I have. About 20 years ago, I took lessons and got the rank of skipper. At the time, I used to rent

sailboats about 10 metres long. They have better control than the smaller sailboats and are more pleasant to sail.

✚ Could you rent one for us? I'd love that.

✚ No. It's been too long since I've gone and I'm not fit enough. Besides, you've never gone, so you wouldn't be much help. But I can rent one with a crew.

✚ Can you really?

✚ Yes. But with a crew, we wouldn't be able to drop anchor and do different things, you know! But it would still be fun.

He gives her a kiss and goes on:

✚ Okay. But we'll have to wait for your cast to be removed. It'll be about 4 or 5 weeks. Otherwise, you won't really enjoy it. Walking on a sailboat requires a certain agility. So, it will have to be in September. For it to be nice, we will have to check the weather. We don't want any chance of rain. The winds should be about 10 km to 15 km, but no more than 20 km per hour. That's typical September weather. When the time comes, I'll arrange it with the marina in the city of Quebec. We'll try for a Friday, Saturday or Sunday, and we should leave right after lunch and return at around 9 or 10 p.m. I want you to see the beauty of the river during the day and evening as well. It's two different worlds.

✚ That sounds wonderful. I'm really looking forward to it.

Some time in early August, Ethan's phone rings. He answers:

🚦 Good morning.

🚦 Good morning. Am I speaking to Mr. Ethan Miller?

🚦 Yes, it's me.

🚦 Let me introduce myself. My name is Albert Samson. I am the chief of staff to the Premier of Quebec.

🚦 Mr. Samson, what can I do for you?

🚦 The Premier saw what happened last month. He saw your television interview. He also spoke with the chief of police in the city of Quebec, who confirmed that during the investigation, the police discovered a recording taken by one of the street cameras that shows very clearly what happened. We wanted to know the identity of the people involved. At our request, the police carefully analyzed the video and identified the individuals in question. Obviously, there's Ms. Jackson and four other people as well, who've been identified.

🚦 I see. What does this have to do with me?

✚ I am getting to that, Mr. Miller. The Premier wishes to hold a ceremony in two weeks. He wants to officially award you the Medal of the National Assembly. He wants for everyone you saved being present during the ceremony. With the exception of Ms. Jackson, I've contacted the other four individuals and they were happy to accept. Actually, they're all looking forward to it. As for Ms. Jackson, I wanted to speak with you first. Would you be willing to attend this ceremony, receive this medal and meet the people who are alive thanks to you? Of course, the Premier will be there, and so will several ministers and dignitaries.

✚ Of course, Mr. Samson. As for Ms. Jackson, I'd like you to be the one to contact her.

✚ That was my intention to begin with. The day before the ceremony, there will be a small rehearsal just for you. A small lesson in protocol. I will be there also.

✚ Not a problem and it will be my pleasure to meet you.

✚ For me as well, it will be an honour. My assistant will contact you with the details.

✚ Perfect.

An hour later, Kate calls him:

✚ Ethan, the Premier's chief of staff just called me. Great news, you're getting a medal. And you'll get to

meet the others you saved. It's fantastic. I'm so happy for you. I asked him how it's going to go. He explained everything to me and suggested that we go to the parliament separately.

✚ Okay, we'll go separately. We'll come back together after it's over. During the ceremony, I imagine you'll be with the other four people, but after that, I want you to be by my side again and stay close to me.

✚ Okay. We'll speak again.

✚ Talk to you later.

Ethan drives to the parliament in the Porsche. Kate takes a taxi. A protocol officer takes care of the five people who were saved. A guard of honour takes Ethan to see the premier. A lot of people are there. Ministers, deputies and reporters applaud him. Ethan looks at them and respectfully nods to them.

The premier starts his speech by first addressing the assembly and then the five people with tears in their eyes. He ends with Ethan, who seems to have kept his cool. The guard of honour takes a box from the table next to them. He opens it and hands it to the premier, who pulls out the medal. He reaches Ethan and pins the medal on him while offering his congratulations. They end by shaking hands.

Then the premier takes a step back and gives way to the five people who come to shake Ethan's hand and kiss him. All of them are crying, even Kate. They take turns expressing their deepest thanks to Ethan. During this acknowledgment, one of them says:

🚩 Today, I have the honour of being here and thanking you in person. But let's not forget my wife and my four kids who still have their father because of you.

On that day, you have saved a lot more than only five people.

When it's her turn, Kate walks up to him and kisses him on the cheeks. Then in his ear, she whispers:

✚ It's crazy how much I love you and I'm so very proud of you.

✚ Stay close to me during the small reception.

✚ I'll be by your side through all of it.

A formal reception features glasses of red and white wine. There are also canapés. Ethan is sticking to the red. Several people come to shake his hand, professing their respect and admiration.

They finally leave the parliament together and go to the Island for some down time. On the way there:

✚ It was deeply moving, she admits.

✚ Yes, it really was.

✚ Ethan, you didn't seem to be affected at all.

✚ Actually, I was really moved when that man spoke about his family. I had never thought about the families before. It's unfortunate they weren't invited.

As she enters the house, Kate stands in front of him and says:

✚ You look good with your medal.

She takes him by the neck and gives him a long hug.

One month has passed and it's time to remove her cast. Her appointment at the hospital is scheduled for Friday at 4 p.m. Ethan has reserved a table at a gourmet restaurant. He takes her to the hospital in her Porsche, and once again, they meet the same doctor.

✚ How are you? he asks.

✚ Kate answers, "All right."

Ethan, stroking her back, adds immediately after her:

✚ Wonderful.

The doctor smiles broadly and gets ready to cut her cast with a special saw. Ethan notices Kate's nervousness as she grabs the sheet from her stretcher. He takes her forearm:

✚ It's going to be okay.

✚ I'm afraid of the saw.

✚ I know, but it's made for that. It can't cut your skin. Doctor, could you please show her?

He places the saw on the palm of his hand and turns it on. Except for the noise of the electric motor, nothing happens. Kate is a little reassured.

✚ One day, you could explain to me why you are so afraid of hospitals.

✚ Maybe, says Kate.

Giving Ethan a side look, the doctor accuses him:

✚ By the way, sir, on the day of the accident, you lied to me.

✚ Lied! What do you mean?

✚ You told me you were married and it wasn't true.

✚ How did you find out?

✚ You were on TV.

✚ Yeah! And if you remember, I publicly apologized to you.

✚ That's true.

✚ Also, no need to keep the secret, we started dating that day. So, I was actually right that day. It was just the hour that was a little wrong.

✚ I knew he was going to say that. Please somebody, suicide him! whispers Kate.

Smiling, the doctor cuts and removes the cast. While a nurse is cleaning Kate's leg, he says:

✚ Mr. Miller, congratulations on your medal of the National Assembly. I saw the ceremony at the parliament. And the man who said you saved more than five people that day. I think he was absolutely right.

They shake hands. Then the doctor examines her leg:

✚ Everything is great.

Ethan asks him:

✚ Do you have any recommendations?

✚ Not really. Everything looks in order, but Ms. Jackson, try not to skip rope.

Ethan asks him:

✚ Do you have a thing for her skin colour?

Kate replies:

✚ Ethan, I have everything I need for that.

When she gets up, she says:

✚ Doctor, thank you for my leg, but really, thanks for your patience while dealing with this insufferable man.

✚ You make a beautiful couple. I wish you nothing but happiness for a very long time.

They all smile and shake hands before departing.

Kate sits in the driver's seat as Ethan tells her:

✚ Just relax! Okay?

✚ Don't worry about it.

✚ Okay?

✚ Okay.

✚ You should know that looking at a beautiful woman driving around in a skirt or a dress is a turn-on. A manual car, even more so.

✚ Why? she asks as she drives out of the parking lot.

✚ Because the skirt or the dress always flies up. So, a skirt up to the knee becomes a mini.

✚ You're such a pervert, you know that? she says, eyes on the road but with a quick and inquisitive look to him.

✚ Yeah! And you enjoy it.

✚ Yes, I do! she says with a smile.

✚ I have to go home and change for the restaurant, she says, and lifts her skirt ever so slightly with her left hand.

✚ Kate, you're obviously sending me a very effective message.

✚ I am, but not before the restaurant. We won't have the time to do everything we want.

Kate is getting ready while Ethan waits for her in the living room, looking at her view of the city. She comes out of her bedroom wearing a sparkling blazer and skirt with vertical grey stripes. Her entire ensemble is very tight. Her skirt ends just above her knees. You can't see that her leg hasn't been exposed to any sunshine for the past two months. Beneath her blazer, she isn't wearing a blouse, nor a bra. Her neckline is plunging and reveals part of her breasts.

Surprised, he exclaims:

✚ Wow. You are so very sexy.

✚ Isn't that what you told me? Or had you forgotten?

✚ Yes, I forgot and I'm rather glad I did. I like surprises.

✚ Let's go, she suggests.

✚ What car are we taking?

✚ Why, the Porsche, of course.

✚ And who's driving?

✚ Me, of course.

✚ Your skirt won't allow you.

✚ We'll see about that.

Kate opens the door on the driver's side and stands with her back to the car. Then, she lifts her skirt, making it a miniskirt. Ethan is in the car, watching her performance

attentively. Then she sits her butt on the seat and turns around, bringing her legs in.

✚ Whew, how about we go back home and forget all about the restaurant?

✚ What? she says, surprised. You're the one who taught me to sit like this. Don't you remember?

✚ That's not the issue, he says, noticing the opening of her neckline, which reveals her entire left breast.

✚ And what is the issue? she asks as she launches the car towards the restaurant.

✚ We'll discuss the issue after the restaurant. You'll see.

✚ I am quite intrigued and rather impatient.

The waiter directs them to a table. Ethan follows and is already feasting his eyes on Kate's carved buttocks. They both choose the gourmet menu, which includes seven courses complete with seven accompanying drinks, all of the chef's choosing.

While they are enjoying the appetizer and enjoying each other's company, the chef comes to their table to ask about their tastes and inquire about any allergies.

The meal is magnificent: the taste of the food and the appearance of each course. Their conversations, the laughter, as well as her neckline that doesn't hold, everything is just perfect.

As they leave the restaurant, Kate gets behind the wheel and drives directly to her house, without further delay.

Throughout the drive, they are silent. They remain silent in the elevator, in the hallway and even in her apartment.

Ethan gently pushes her against the wall. He doesn't want it to become sexual, he wants it to be emotional. He begins to caress each side of her face gently, then her neck. He kisses her, not using his tongue, and his hands reach down to fondle her glorious buttocks beneath the suit that contours her shape beautifully. Kate joins him in the kiss and then slowly draws him into the room, closing the door behind them.

Ethan is monitoring the weather, as he can now plan a day of sailing. They have to wait for a Saturday in the middle of September for the conditions to be just right.

They go to a restaurant close to the marina in the city of Quebec to eat lunch. They order a standard meal along with a glass of wine. Then they head to the reception area of the marina where the captain and his crew are waiting for them. The captain asks:

✚ Have you ever been sailing before?

Ethan answers:

✚ I've gone before, but Kate hasn't. It's her first time.

✚ Tell me a little about your experiences.

✚ I got my skipper's licence and even took my courses here, at this marina.

He asks him:

✚ Do you want to steer the boat today?

✚ No thanks. I prefer being a passenger and most of all, being with Kate on a trip that I hope she won't forget.

The captain steers the sailboat into the lock and docks it. Ethan explains:

✚ Kate, today, this will be your first surprise. Normally, people go to the lock and look down on those lucky enough to be motorboating or sailing. Now, Kate, you're on the bottom, looking up and seeing people who are a little envious.

✚ That's true. And it's quite high.

✚ That's because right here, the high tides during the equinoxes could reach up to 6 metres. So, the dock has to be even higher.

✚ How interesting.

The gate of the lock opens, letting the boats through. The captain steers the sailboat, powered by the engine, to the middle of the river, facing west. Once in position, the two sails are hoisted. The boat begins its course with a south-westerly wind of about 15 km. This wind generates good waves and tilts the boat to the right. Ethan and Kate sit on the highest side, on the left. Kate, with her hair blowing in the wind, has the amazed look of a child. She is looking everywhere, trying not to miss anything. She is surprised when the sailboat rises over one wave only to drop down again as it cuts into the next wave, with water splitting on each side of the boat and splashing in the air. From time to time, there is a spray of water that blows over the boat, wetting those on board. She is looking and taking pictures of

the Château Frontenac, resting atop of its mountain. She turns around to look at Levis and take pictures.

Ethan, who has already seen all of this, watches this beautiful woman who is experiencing it for the very first time. Her gaze, her broad smile, and the emotions pervading her entire body make Ethan truly happy.

Kate realizes he's looking at her. She smiles at him and kisses him as she caresses his cheek. Then she returns to her infatuation.

Ethan gets up and asks the captain:

✚ Can I steer a little? In such a wind, it's so much fun to sail a sailboat. Besides, I want to get away from Kate for a bit to let her enjoy it to the fullest.

✚ Okay, great! I wondered how long it was going to take you to make up your mind. The boat is yours, he finishes with a smile.

Ethan wants to take full advantage of the boat's power. He looks at the wind, turns a little to change the direction and asks to adjust the sails. The boat approaches the river bank.

He announces:

✚ We're going to have to change the direction.

The captain asks him:

✚ Are you able to handle it?

✚ Yes.

✚ You're up.

As Ethan looks at Kate:

✚ Kate, stay where you are. I'll tell you when to move.

✚ Yes boss!

✚ You don't say "boss" on a boat. You say "sir", he says in an authoritarian tone.

She gives him a laugh and a military salute with her hand:

✚ Yes sir!

He starts:

✚ Ready to swing to port.

✚ The sails ready, replies the captain with a smile that depicts his satisfaction at seeing the pleasure on the face of his new helmsman.

Ethan quickly turns the wheel, and the ship begins to swing. The sails change sides quickly and let out a bang. He puts the sailboat in position to get the best wind, and the crew adjusts both sails. Then the sailboat, which has barely slowed down, picks up speed, while leaning to the left. Kate, finding herself very close to the water, dips her hand in it.

✚ Kate, you can go to the other side if you want.

She gets up and moves to the other side of the sailboat, passing behind Ethan. As she moves behind him, she hugs him and whispers in his ear:

✚ I never knew I was making love with a handsome captain.

After a few minutes, Ethan tells the captain:

✚ I'll play the passenger again. Thank you very much.

✚ Why? You can continue.

✚ You should! Kate says in agreement.

✚ Thank you, but I want to stay close to you.

The captain takes over the control. Ethan sits down, very close to Kate and puts his hand on her thigh. She lays her hand on Ethan's.

✚ I just remembered the joy of sailing a sailboat, especially with such a good headwind. It was fantastic.

✚ We could rent one again.

✚ Why not?

She kisses him on the cheek. Then, she continues to admire the scenery. They sail under the two bridges that connect the north and south banks of the river.

The Captain then asks:

✚ Do you want to continue up to Neuville, or do we turn back to get to the south of Île d'Orléans? You should know there isn't much from here to Neuville.

✚ What do you think we should do, sir? she asks Ethan in a mocking voice.

✚ I am no longer in charge, so I am no longer the boss. You're the boss now.

✚ So, what do you recommend? she asks.

✚ We change tack.

✚ Okay. We change tack! she tells the captain.

✚ Aye, aye. Watch your heads, we're going to gybe.

🚩 To gybe? Kate asks.

🚩 When changing direction, the mainsail can change sides suddenly. You have to watch the boom.

🚩 The what?

🚩 That big thing under the mainsail, pointing to it. You want it to go over your head, not chop it off. I don't want you to lose that beautiful head.

🚩 You are so kind to me.

But the captain knows what he's doing. He brings the mainsail back to the centre of the boat and asks them:

🚩 Please cross over. With a tailwind, the mainsail will blow on your side.

They cross over to the other side and Ethan says:

🚩 You'll see, downwind is really nice. Compared to before, you'll have the impression that we're not going forward, but we'll be going even faster. You'll see, it's a lot less windy. It'll feel like you're floating on the top of a wave.

After several minutes, Kate notices:

🚩 Ethan, you were right. The difference is really impressive.

🚩 The wind is actually strong, and it always has that effect. The first time, you find it quite strange.

The sailboat travels between the city of Quebec and Levis, then Beauport and reaches the tip of the island. It is almost 5 p.m., and the wind has dropped by half. The sailboat slows down a little, helped by the falling tide.

The Captain warns them:

✚ We'll have to probably go back using the engine.

Ethan says:

✚ No problem. Kate, look over there, pointing.
That's my house.

✚ Yes, I can see it. Could we get a little closer? she asks the captain.

✚ Of course.

He makes the necessary turn.

Kate takes a few pictures of his house. After several minutes, the captain says:

✚ We'll have to tack, so we don't run aground.

He steers the sailboat to the east of the Island, telling them that they should eat now. The crew brought their own food. Kate opens the cooler and pulls out the sandwiches she brought:

✚ Here, enjoy and remember that I put a lot of love into it.

It is just past 6 p.m. when the boat reaches the eastern tip of the Island. The captain informs them:

✚ We're going to have to turn back. Ethan, you wanted to see the city of Quebec at night.

✚ That's right!

✚ If we use the engine, we'll be able to go closer to the bridges and get back to the marina around 10 p.m. Is that okay?

✚ Okay with me. What about you, Kate?

✚ Of course.

The crewmen bring the sails back up. The captain starts the engine and then sails back towards the city of Quebec. The sun finally sets and darkness sets in. Already at the western tip of the Island, they can make out the city of Quebec, with its lights. When they reach the marina, they can see the lights of Levis. The boat is slowly making its way between the two cities. Kate, still fascinated, is looking everywhere.

They come across a large tanker very closely. Kate looks up and exclaims:

✚ Wow! It's huge!

Back at the marina, they get their stuff and carry it to Ethan's car, close by. They turn back to go thank the captain and his crewmen for their kindness.

Reaching the car once again, Ethan starts to say something, but Kate takes him by the head and kisses him. The first kiss is small and sweet. The second is longer and wetter. The third is deeply sexual. Then she hugs him around the neck and holds him tightly. Ethan says:

✚ Whew!

After a few seconds, he continues:

✚ Listen. You're going to have to be a little careful. Chances are you'll get a little dizzy. It's happened to me once or twice, in the shower, after a good day of sailing.

I'm not sure why it happens only in the shower. But when it does come, I have to put my hand on the wall. What it will be for you, we can't know yet. It's the inner ear that has to find its balance. It loses it on a sailboat because the movements on the water force our equilibrium to adapt. Now it must readjust. It doesn't take long, especially if you drink a little alcohol like rum or cognac. Alcohol helps if you don't drink too much. Only a little ounce or two.

✚ You shower after you go sailing?

✚ Yes!

✚ I'd like a shower now.

✚ Okay! he says.

✚ But you have to come with me in case I fall.

✚ Oh! I understand. So, we'll have to take care of each other.

✚ That's right!

✚ Does that mean that we each wash the other person?

✚ You got it.

Ethan starts the car and heads for the Island. On the way, Kate grips Ethan's thigh and slips her hand to his crotch, staying there for a few seconds. Then she takes his hand on the top of the gearshift and caresses it with her thumb.

Once home, they bring in the cooler and the bag with their warm clothes. They drink a glass of cognac and head for the shower, holding each other by the hips.

They set their glasses on the sink counter. Ethan gently undresses Kate, who proceeds to do the same. Naked, she enters the shower first and is followed by Ethan. He turns on the faucet, and the hot water gushes out like rain. They enjoy the heat and hug each other for a few minutes. As she closes her eyes, enjoying the moment, she loses her sense of balance ever so slightly. Ethan holds on to her. She opens her eyes and affirms:

✚ You just saved me again. It's becoming a habit.

She kisses him passionately. Their hands are lathered with soap and they start washing each other's necks, shoulders, and arms. They synchronize their movements and look into each other's eyes. As their hands move towards their partner's back, they begin caressing and rubbing each other, purposefully making their way to the buttocks. Their hands move up, on the side up to the shoulders. They gently recede back and start washing each other's chests. After a little while, their hands move lower and rub their stomach and finally, pleasurably their sex.

They make it to the bed without drying themselves and, in the dark, lie down, tenderly caress each other, and finally make love.

Now November has arrived. The cold heralds the painful end of autumn. Kate calls Ethan to ask if he can free himself for lunch and meet her at a good restaurant close by.

Seated at the table, she begins:

✚ Ethan, from the very onset, I want to confess that this is a trap. My boss, the President of the company, will come and meet us in about thirty minutes. Actually, I told him all about you and he wants to meet you.

✚ You mean he wants to interview me?

✚ That's right.

✚ Why?

✚ He wants to offer you a very important position.

✚ Okay, I'll play along. I've done a lot of interviews in my career. But usually, I know the position or the circumstances before the interview. So, you'll have to fill me in.

✚ Of course, but I'm going to have to keep some things secret... He wants to expand our financial investment company. He wants someone from the outside in order to reach new markets. Until further notice, it's

top secret. It's a very, very big project that will last one to two years. However, he's offering me the position of SVP, Senior Vice-President of Accounting and Finance. He's asking me to move to Montreal.

Suddenly, Ethan feels a quivering growing inside him. He lowers his eyes and thinks:

I am losing her.

Then he looks to the left and the right, avoiding her gaze. Again, he looks down at his hands.

He is thinking:

I have to trust the Universe. It protects me. I have to control myself. I have to calm down.

Kate looks at him and understands what he is going through. To reassure him, she says:

✚ Hey! Wait a second. I see that you're thinking the worst. But why don't you come to Montreal with me?

✚ You just said, "why don't you come to Montreal with me?" I see that your decision has already been made. So as far as our relationship is concerned, the ball is in my court. I will have to decide whether we continue seeing each other. I must tell you that hearing this in this restaurant without any prior discussion, it makes me sick. I want to shout out all my anger. Right now, I just want to escape from here, from this restaurant and from you. Besides, I have no idea why I'm still sitting

here. Maybe I'm afraid to end this wonderful relationship that seems to have lasted only four months.

✚ Geez, Ethan! I have to say that I didn't expect such a strong reaction from you.

✚ What? You thought I would agree to this without saying anything, just like a dog obeying his master? Come on now! You are much smarter than this... I should leave, he says, turning his head from left to right.

Suddenly, he gets up and grabs his coat that he had left on the back of his chair. Sadly, he announces:

✚ Listen Kate, obviously, the time has come when we have to go our separate ways. So good luck in Montreal.

He immediately goes towards the exit of the restaurant.

Wondering what comes next? Here's a sneak peek:

The Shift

Book 2 follows intense moments when Ethan and Kate must each consider a brand new life with no other foundation but their love. It all starts with a very unusual business interview where the interviewer soon becomes the interviewee.

The consequences of their decision then become quite clear. Trips between the city of Quebec and Montreal are quite frequent. On one such trip, they face the rigors of a harsh Quebec winter storm. On their last Saturday in the city of Québec, as the lovers have a romantic supper planned, an unexpected figure from Ethan's past arrives suddenly and clouds their evening.

We follow them in their daily lives, witness their intimate games and are there during that unforgettable evening, outside a jazz bar, when their very lives are threatened.

This entire time, Ethan promptly joins the top tier of a vast Canadian financial investment company. He then lays the groundwork for a merger proposal, which, among other things, sheds light on several minor instances of fraud taking place in the American company.

