

Toni Garcia

Love, Come and Gone and Back Again

A half empty beer, one more cigarette left and 3oh!3 playing on the juke box.... what a typical night at the bar. I've been swirling down the drain of self pity and doubt for too long now but at this moment the best thing to do for myself is order another shot and watch all of the people be happy and drunk.

I feel the longing. The need to be held and the want to not let go. I can only think about how much I miss feeling such a strong love for someone that I never want to be apart from them. I miss feeling wanted.

Time for another shot, maybe a beer this time, too. Something good has to be coming my way. It's been too long that I've sat alone in the bar, that I've looked in the mirror and wondered why, what was wrong with me. I never doubt myself, my looks, my personality, but lately, I feel a loss of confidence. I feel as if there is no sense in tomorrow. Suicide? No. Absolutely not. An escape? A new start in a new place? Perhaps. Maybe I'll move to Vegas. That sounds like fun.

Another shot. Enough self loathing... time to play pool. As I start the second game, cocky and talking trash to the competitor, I see him sitting at the bar. He's wearing a black leather jacket, has a gorgeous smile and orders a Heineken. Nice. I love Heineken. I saw him look at me, I know he was watching.

"You're shot."

I miss.

Looking over my shoulder again to see if he's still watching. He is. *I'm pretty sure I'm done playing pool, I think it's time for another beer, and maybe a seat at the bar.*

We talked every night at that same bar, in almost those same seats, drinking Heineken and growing closer. *I'm going to ask him to dinner.*

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My bags are packed, my flight is booked and I leave Monday morning. I'm moving to Vegas. I don't have a place to live yet and I probably don't have enough money to get one right away, but I have plenty of friends out there and with my winning personality, what can go wrong?

My phone rings and it's him. The guy from the bar. He's going to meet me at 9 tonight for drinks. My heart starts racing and my palms get sweaty. *Don't over think this, Toni. It's just drinks, you've already had drinks with him a few times anyways, why are you so worried?* I start to get ready, pick out my outfit and do my hair. *Well, you look good. Just breathe. You're moving in a few days anyways so it's not like this will turn into anything. Just have fun.*

"Kettle One Martini please, extra dirty".
There he is.

He ordered a Heineken, of course and we shared the Seared Ahi Tuna for an appetizer. Our conversation was amazing, we never stopped talking long enough to feel that "awkward" moment. He told me about his work, his family and his goals in life. I told him about my parents and brother, how I love to travel, and finally, that I was moving to Las Vegas in a few days. He seemed a little put off by it but his only response

was, "Well my brother lives out there so I'm sure I'll see you when I come visit"

We finish the night at his house, simply talking and sharing stories all night. Little to no sleep, and no sex either... we decide to go to breakfast and to the movies. After some much needed Bloody Mary's and Madagascar 2, we parted ways with a hug, a kiss, and the promise to keep in touch.

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I arrived in Las Vegas early Monday afternoon, my ride was waiting for me. I spent the next two days wandering around, meeting new people and looking for apartments, none of which appealed to me at all.

My phone rings, it's him. "I'm coming out there, I'm going to leave around 8 when I get off of work, I hope you don't mind but I really want to see you". *Oh my gosh, he's serious. He's actually coming to Vegas to see me?? Crazy.*

Sure enough, as promised, he showed up and met me in the circle bar in the Stratosphere. We had martinis, sushi and some beers and went back to the hotel he was staying at. Maybe it was the amazing conversations or maybe it was my "prince in shining armor" driving halfway across the country to see me but this was it. *This is the man I want to spend my life with.*

"Do you want to get married?" I ask.

No response.

"Hey, do you want to get married?" I ask again.

"Okay". he answers with a huge smile on his face.

That was it... the next morning we got up, packed up all of our things, together and went to the court house. His brother acted as our witness and by 10pm we were man and wife. Perfect strangers married to each other. Forever. Neither of us could be happier.

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Two and a half years later, I share a life with my true love. We have two wonderful children together and can honestly say we are both still so happy and so much in love.

I no longer drown myself in self pity and shots of Jager. I surround myself with the love from my children and my husband. At one point I lost all of the love I had for myself. he gave it back to me. The guy at the bar, in the black leather jacket with a gorgeous smile. The guy who ordered the Heineken. My love, my life, my husband.