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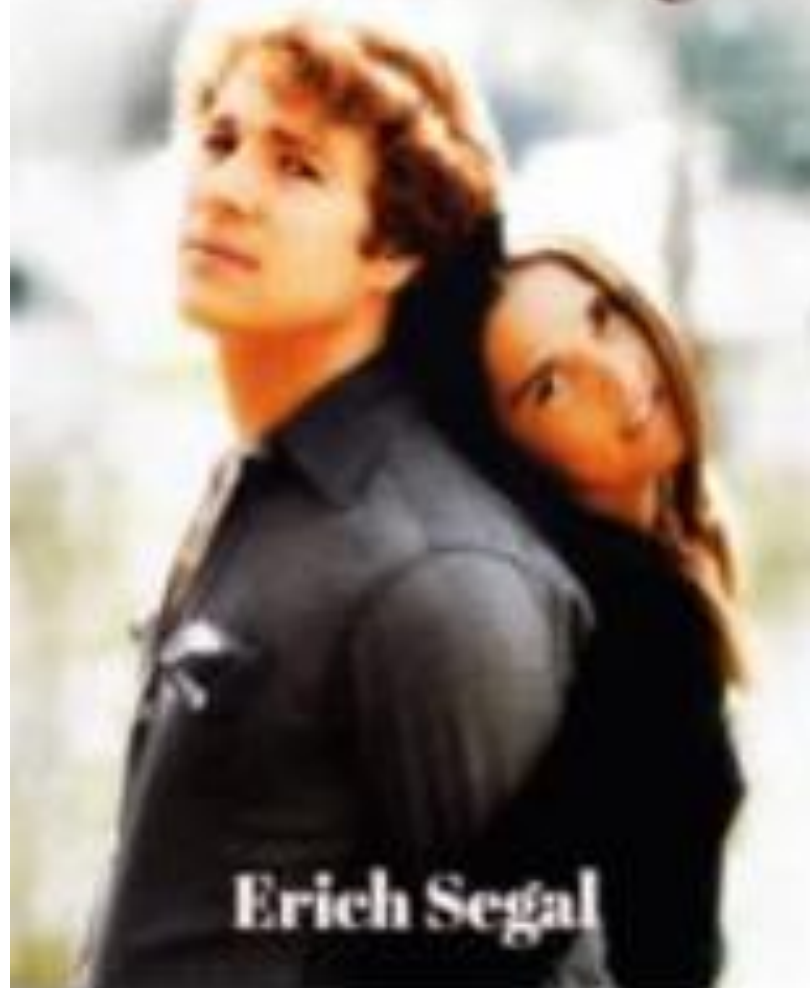
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Love
Story



Erich Segal

Love Story Part 1

By Erich Segal

CHAPTER ONE

Stupid and rich, clever and poor

What can you say about a twenty-five-year-old girl who died?

You can say that she was beautiful and intelligent. She loved Mozart and Bach and the Beatles. And me. Once, when she told me that, I asked her who came first. She answered, smiling, "Like in the ABC." I smiled too. But now I wonder. Was she talking about my first name? If she was, I came last, behind Mozart. Or did she mean my last name? If she did, I came between Bach and the Beatles. But I still didn't come first. That worries me terribly now. You see, I always had to be Number One. Family pride, you see.

In the autumn of my last year at Harvard University, I studied a lot in the Radcliffe library.

The library was quiet, nobody knew me there, and they had the books that I needed for my studies. The day before an examination, I went over to the library desk to ask for a book. Two girls were working there. One was tall and sporty. The other was quiet and wore glasses. I chose her, and asked for my book.

She gave me an unfriendly look. 'Don't you have a library at Harvard?' she asked.

'Radcliffe let us use their library,' I answered.

'Yes, Preppie, they do - but is it fair? Harvard has five million books. We have a few thousand.'

Oh dear, I thought. A clever Radcliffe girl. I can usually make girls like her feel very small. But I needed that damn book, so I had to be polite.

'Listen, I need that damn book.'

'Don't speak like that to a lady, Preppie.'

'Why are you so sure that I went to prep school?'

She took off her glasses. 'You look stupid and rich,' she said.

'You're wrong,' I said. 'I'm actually clever and poor.'

'Oh no, Preppie,' she said. 'I'm clever and poor.'

She was looking straight at me. All right, she had pretty brown eyes; and OK, perhaps I looked rich. But I don't let anyone call me stupid.

'What makes you so clever?' I asked.

'I'm not going to go for coffee with you,' she said.

'Listen - I'm not going to ask you!'

'That', she said, 'is what makes you stupid.'

Let me explain why I took her for coffee. I got the book that I wanted, didn't I? And she couldn't leave the library until closing time. So I was able to study the book for a good long time. I got an A in my exam the next day.

I gave the girl's legs an A too, when she came out from behind the library desk. We went to a coffee shop and I ordered coffee for both of us.

'I'm Jennifer Cavilleri,' she said. 'I'm American, but my family came from Italy. I'm studying music'

'My name is Oliver,' I said.

'Is that you're first or your last name?' she asked.

'First. My other name is Barrett.'

'Oh,' she said. 'Like Elizabeth Barrett the writer?'

'Yes,' I said. 'No relation.'

I was pleased that she hadn't said, 'Barrett, like Barrett Hall?' That Barrett is a relation of mine. Barrett Hall is a large, unlovely building at Harvard University. My great grandfather gave it to Harvard long ago, and I am deeply ashamed of it.

She was silent. She sat there, half-smiling at me. I looked at her notebooks.

'Sixteenth-century music?' I said. 'That sounds difficult.'

'It's too difficult for you, Preppie,' she said coldly.

Why was I letting her talk to me like this? Didn't she read the university magazine? Didn't she know who I was?

'Hey, don't you know who I am?'

'Yes,' she answered. 'You're the man who owns Barrett Hall.'

She didn't know who I was.

'I don't own Barrett Hall,' I argued. 'My great-grandfather gave it to Harvard, that's all.'

'So that's why his not-so-great grandson could get into Harvard so easily!'

I was angry now. 'Jenny, if I'm no good, why did you want me to invite you for coffee?'

She looked straight into my eyes and smiled.

'I like your body!' she said.

Every big winner has to be a good loser too. Every good Harvard man knows that. But it's better if you can win. And so, as I walked with Jenny to her dormitory, I made my winning move.

'Listen, Friday night is the Dartmouth hockey match?'

'So?'

'So I'd like you to come.'

These Radcliffe girls, they really care about sport. 'And why', she asked, 'should I come to a stupid ice-hockey match?'

'Because I'm playing,' I answered.

There was a moment's silence. I think I heard snow falling.

'For which team?' she said.

By the second quarter of the game on Friday night, we were winning 0:0. That is, Davey Johnson and I were getting ready to score a goal. The crowd were screaming for blood - or a goal. I always feel that it's my job to give them both these things. I didn't look up at Jenny once, but I hoped she was watching me.

I got the puck and started off across the ice. Davey Johnson was there on my left, but I didn't pass the puck to him. I wanted to score this goal myself. But before I could shoot, two big Dartmouth men were after me. In a moment, we were hitting the puck and each other as hard as we could.

'You!' said a voice suddenly. 'Two minutes in the penalty box.'

I looked up. He was talking to me. 'What did I do?' I asked. 'Don't argue.' He called to the officials' desk: 'Number seven, two minutes in the penalty box, for fighting.' Angrily I climbed into the penalty box.

'Why are you sitting here when all your friends are playing?'

The voice was Jenny's. I didn't answer. 'Come on, Harvard, get that puck!' I shouted.

'What did you do wrong?' Jenny asked.

'I tried too hard.' Out there on the ice Harvard were playing with only five men.

'Is that something to be ashamed of?'

'Jenny, please. I'm thinking.'

'What about?'

'About those two Dartmouth men. When I get back onto the ice, I'll break them into little pieces.'

'Do you always fight when you play hockey?'

'I'll fight you, Jenny, if you don't keep quiet.'

'I'm leaving. Goodbye.'

I looked round, but she had gone. Just then, the bell rang. My two-minute penalty had finished. I jumped onto the ice again.

'Good old Barrett!' shouted the crowd. Jenny will hear them shouting for me, I thought. But where was she? Had she left?

As I went for the puck, I looked up into the crowd. Jenny was standing there. I took the puck and went towards the goal line. Two Dartmouth players were coming straight at me.

'Go, Oliver, go! Knock their heads off!'

That was Jenny's voice above the crowd. It was crazily, beautifully violent. I pushed past one Dartmouth man. I knocked hard into the other. Then I passed the puck to Davey Johnson, and he banged it into the Dartmouth goal. The crowd went wild.

In a moment we were all shouting and kissing and banging each other on the back. The crowd were screaming with excitement. After that, we murdered Dartmouth - seven goals to zero.

After the match, I lay in the hot bath and thought with pride about the game. I'd scored one goal, and helped to score another. Now the water felt wonderful on my tired body.

Ahhhh!

Suddenly I remembered Jenny. Was she still waiting outside? I hoped so! I jumped out of that bath and dressed as fast as I could.

Outside, the cold winter air hit me. I looked round for Jenny. Had she walked back to her dormitory alone? Suddenly I saw her.

'Hey, Preppie, it's cold out here.'

I was really pleased to see her, and gave her a quick kiss. 'Did I say you could kiss me?' she said.

'Sorry. I was just excited.'

'I wasn't.'

It was dark and quiet, out there in the cold. I kissed her again, more slowly. When we reached her dormitory, I did not kiss her goodnight.

'Listen, Jenny, perhaps I won't telephone you for a few months.'

She was silent for a moment. 'Why?' she asked at last. 'But perhaps I'll telephone you as soon as I get back to my dorm.' I turned and began to walk away.

'Damn Preppie!' I heard her say. I turned again. From twenty feet away I scored another goal.

'You see, Jenny, that's the kind of thing you say. And when other people do it to you, you don't like it.'

I wished I could see the look on her face. But I couldn't look back. My pride wouldn't let me.

When I returned to my dorm, Ray Stratton was there. He and I slept in the same room. Ray was playing cards with some of his football-playing friends.

'Hello, Ollie,' said Ray. 'How many goals did you score?'

'I scored one, and I made one,' I answered.

'With Cavilleri?'

'That's none of your business!' I replied quickly.

'Who's Cavilleri?' asked one of the footballers.

'Jenny Cavilleri. Studies music. Plays the piano with the Music Group.'

'What does she play with Barrett?' Everyone laughed.

'Get lost!' I said as I entered my room.

There I took off my shoes, lay back on my bed and telephoned Jenny's dormitory.

'Hey, Jen...' I said softly.

'Yes?'

'I think I'm in love with you.'

She was silent for a few moments. Then she answered, very softly: 'Oliver, you're crazy.'

I wasn't unhappy. Or surprised.

CHAPTER TWO

Blood and stone

A few weeks later, I was hurt in the hockey match at Cornell University. My face was badly cut and the officials gave me the penalty for starting the fight. Five minutes! I sat quietly in the penalty box while the team manager cleaned the blood off my face. I was ashamed to look out onto the ice. But the shouts of the crowd told me everything. Cornell scored a goal. The score was 3-3 now. Damn, I thought. We're going to lose this match, because of me.

Across the ice, among the crowd, I saw him. My father. Old Stony face. He was looking straight at me.

'If the meeting finishes in time, I'll come to Cornell and watch you play,' he had told me on the phone.

And there he was, Oliver Barrett the Third. What was he thinking about? Who could say? Why was he here? Family pride, perhaps. 'Look at me. I am a very busy, important man, but I have come all the way to Cornell, just to watch my son play in a hockey match.'

We lost six goals to three. After the match the doctor put twelve stitches in my face.

When I got to the changing-room, it was empty. They don't want to talk to me, I thought. I lost that match. I felt very ashamed as I walked out into the winter night.

'Come and have dinner, son,' said a voice. It was Old Stony face.

At dinner, we had one of our non-conversations. We spoke to each other, but didn't actually say anything. These non-conversations always started with 'How have you been, son?' and ended with 'Is there anything I can do for you?'

'How have you been, son?' my father began.

'Fine, sir.'

'Does your face hurt?'

'No, sir.' (It hurt terribly.)

Next, Old Stony face talked about Playing the Game. 'All right, son, you lost the match.' (How clever of you to notice, Father.) 'But after all, in sport, the important thing is the playing, not the winning.'

Wonderful, I thought. Father was chosen for the Olympic Games. And now he says winning is not important!

I just looked down at my plate and said 'Yes, sir, at the right times.'

Our non-conversation continued. After playing the game, he discussed My Plans.

'Tell me, Oliver, has the Law School accepted you yet?'

'Not yet, sir.'

'Would you like me to telephone them?'

'No!' I said at once. 'I want to get a letter like other people, sir. Please.'

'Yes, of course. Fine... After all, they're sure to accept you.'

Why? I thought. Because I'm clever and successful? Or because I'm the son of Oliver Barrett the Third?

The meal was as uninteresting as the conversation. At last, my father spoke again.

'There's always the Peace Corps,' he said suddenly. 'I think the Peace Corps is a fine thing, don't you?'

'Oh, yes, sir,' I said politely. I knew nothing about the Peace Corps.

'What do your friends at Harvard think about the Peace Corps?' he asked. 'Do they feel that the Peace Corps is important in our world today?'

'Yes, sir,' I said politely, just to please him.

After dinner, I walked with him to his car.

'Is there anything I can do for you, son?' he asked.

'No, thank you, sir. Good night, sir.'

Our non-conversation was finished: he drove away. Yes, of course there are planes, but Oliver Barrett the Third chose to drive. My father likes to drive - fast. And at that time of night, in an Aston Martin DBS, you can go very fast indeed.

I went to telephone Jenny. That was the only good part of the evening. I told her about the fight. She enjoyed that. Her musical friends never got into fights.

'I hope you hit the man who hit you,' she said.

'Oh, yes.'

'Good! I'm sorry I couldn't be there to watch you. Perhaps you'll hit somebody in the Yale match?'

I smiled. Jenny really made me feel better.

Back at Harvard the next day, I called at her dorm. Jenny was talking to someone on the telephone in the hall.

'Yes. Of course! Oh yes, Phil. I love you too. Love and kisses. Goodbye.'

Who was she talking to? I had only been away forty-eight hours, and she had found a new boyfriend!

Jenny did not seem ashamed. She kissed me lightly on the unhurt side of my face.

'Hey - you look terrible!'

'Twelve stitches, Jen.'

'Does the other man look worse than you?'

'Much worse. I always make the other man look worse.'

We walked to my MG sports car. 'Who's Phil?' I asked as carelessly as I could.

'My father.'

I could not believe that! 'You call your father Phil?'

'That's his name. What do you call your father?'

'Sir.'

'He must be really proud of you. You're a big hockey star - and you're always successful in your exams.'

'You don't know anything, Jenny. He was good at exams and sport, too. He was in the Olympic Games.'

'My God! Did he win?'

'No.' (Actually, Old Stony face was sixth, which makes me feel a little better.)

Jenny was silent for a moment.

'Why do you hate him so much?' she asked at last.

'I'm Oliver Barrett the Fourth,' I answered. 'All Barrett's have to be successful. And that means I have to be good at everything, all the time. I hate it.'

'Oh, I'm sure you do,' laughed Jenny. 'You hate doing well in your exams. You hate being a hockey star...'

'But he expects it!' I said. 'If I'm successful, he isn't excited, or surprised. He was a big success, and he expects me to be the same.'

I told her about our meal and our non-conversation after the Cornell match, but she didn't understand at all.

'You say your father is a busy man,' she said. 'But he found time to go all the way to Cornell to watch you play. How can you say these terrible things about him, when he drove all that way, just to watch your hockey match? He loves you, Oliver - can't you understand?'

'Forget it, Jenny,' I said. She was silent for a moment.

'I'm pleased you have problems with your father,' she said at last. 'That means you aren't perfect.'

'Oh - you mean you are perfect?'

'Of course not, Preppie. That's why I go out with you!'

Jenny loved to have the last word.

CHAPTER THREE

We belong together

I had not yet made love to Jenny. In the three weeks we had been together, we had held hands. Sometimes we had kissed, but that was all. Usually I moved much faster - ask the other girls that I'd been out with! But Jenny was special. I felt different about her and I didn't know what to say to her. 'You're going to fail your exams, Oliver.'

We were studying in my room one Sunday afternoon. 'Oliver, you'll fail your exams if you don't do some work.'

'I am working.'

'No, you aren't. You're looking at my legs.'

'Only once every chapter.'

'That book has very short chapters.'

'Listen, you aren't as good-looking as all that!'

'I know, but you think I am, don't you?'

'Dammit, Jenny, how can I study when all the time I want to make love to you?'

She closed her book softly and put it down. She put her arms around me.

'Oliver, will you please make love to me?'

It all happened at once. It was all so unhurried, soft and gentle. And I was gentle too. Was this the real Oliver Barrett the Fourth?

'Hey, Oliver, did I ever tell you that I love you?' said Jenny finally.

'No, Jen.' I kissed her neck.

'I love you very much, Oliver.'

I love Ray Stratton too. He's not very clever, or a wonderful footballer, but he was a good friend to me. Where did he go to study when I was in our room with Jenny? Where did he sleep on those Saturdays when Jenny and I spent the night together? In the old days, I always told him all about my girlfriends. But I never told him about Jenny and me.

'My God, Barrett, are you two sleeping together or not?' asked Ray.

'Raymond, please don't ask.'

'You spend every minute of your free time with her. It isn't natural...'

'Ray, when two adults are in love...'

'Love? At your age? My God, I worry about you, I really do.'

'Don't worry, Raymond, old friend. We'll have that flat in New York one day. Different girls every night...'

'Don't you tell me not to worry, Barrett. That girl's got you, and I don't like it!'

That evening I went to hear Jenny play the piano with the Music Group.

'You were wonderful,' I said afterwards.

'That shows what you know about music, Preppie.' We walked along the river together. 'I played OK. Not wonderful. Not "Olympic Games". Just OK. OK?'

'OK - but you should always continue your music'

'Of course I will. I'm going to study with Nadia Boulanger, aren't I?'

'Who?'

'Nadia Boulanger. She's a famous music teacher in Paris. I'm very lucky. I won a scholarship, too.'

'Jennifer - you're going to Paris?'

'I've never seen Europe. I'm really excited about it.'

I took her by the arms and pulled her towards me. 'Hey - how long have you known this?'

Jenny looked down at her feet. 'Oliver, don't be stupid. We can't do anything about it. After we finish university, you'll go your way and I'll go mine. You'll go to law school -'

'Wait a minute! What are you talking about?'

She looked into my eyes. 'Ollie, you're a rich Preppie. Your old man owns a bank. My father's a baker in Cranston, Rhode Island... and I'm nobody.'

'What does that matter? We're together now. We're happy.'

'Ollie, don't be stupid,' she repeated. 'Harvard is full of all kinds of different people. You study together, you have fun together. But afterwards you have to go back to where you belong.'

'We belong together. Don't leave me, Jenny. Please.'

'What about my scholarship? What about Paris?'

'What about our marriage?'

'Who said anything about marriage?' said Jenny in surprise.

'Me. I'm saying it now.'

'Why?'

I looked straight into her eyes.

'Because,' I said.

'Oh,' said Jenny. 'That's a very good reason.' She took my arm and we walked along the river. There was nothing more to say, really.

The next Sunday we drove to visit my parents in Ipswich, Massachusetts. Jenny said it was the right thing to do, and of course, there was also the fact that Oliver the Third paid for my studies at Harvard.

'Oh my God,' Jenny said when we drove up to the house. 'I didn't expect this. It's like a damn palace!'

'Please, Jen. Everything will be fine.'

'For a nice all-American girl of good family, perhaps. Not for Jennifer Cavilleri, baker's daughter, from Cranston, Rhode Island.'

Florence opened the door. She has worked for the Barrett family for many years. She told us that my parents were waiting in the library. We followed her past a long line of pictures of famous Barrett's and a glass case full of silver and gold cups.

'They look just like real silver and gold,' said Jenny. 'They don't give cups like those at the Cranston Sports Club!'

'They are real silver and gold,' I answered.

'My God! Are they yours?'

'No, my father's.'

'Do you have silver and gold cups too, Oliver?'

'Yes.'

'In a glass case, like these?'

'No. Up in my room, under the bed.'

She gave me one of her good Jenny-looks. 'We'll go and look at them later, shall we?'

Before I could answer, we heard a voice.

'Ah, hello there.' It was Old Stony face.

'Oh, hello, sir. This is Jennifer -'

'Hello there.' He shook her hand before I could say her full name. There was a smile on his usually rock-like face. 'Do come in and meet Mrs Barrett... My wife Alison. This is Jennifer -'

'Calliveri,' I said - for the first and only time, I got her damn name wrong!

'Cavilleri,' said Jenny politely. Mother and Jenny shook hands.

All through dinner, Mother kept the polite small talk going.

'So your people are from Cranston, Jennifer?' said my mother.

'Mostly. My mother came from Fall River.'

'The Barrett's have factories at Fall River,' said Oliver the Third.

'Where they cheated their workers for centuries,' said Oliver the Fourth.

'In the nineteenth century,' said Oliver the Third.

'What about the plans to put automatic machines in the factories?' said Oliver the Fourth.

'What about coffee?' my mother said quickly. We moved back into the library. We sat there with nothing to say to each other. So I started a new non-conversation.

'Tell me, Jennifer,' I said, 'what do you think about the Peace Corps?' She looked at me in surprise.

'Oh, have you told them, O.B.?' asked my mother.

'It isn't the time for that, my dear,' said Oliver Barrett the Third, with an "Ask me, ask me!" look on his face. 'What's this, Father?' I asked just to please him.

'Nothing important, son.'

'I don't know how you can say that,' said my mother. She turned to me. 'Your father is going to be Head of the Peace Corps.'

'Oh,' I said.

'Oh!' said Jenny in a different, happier kind of voice. 'Well done, Mr Barrett.' She gave me a hard look.

'Yes. Well done, sir,' I said at last.

