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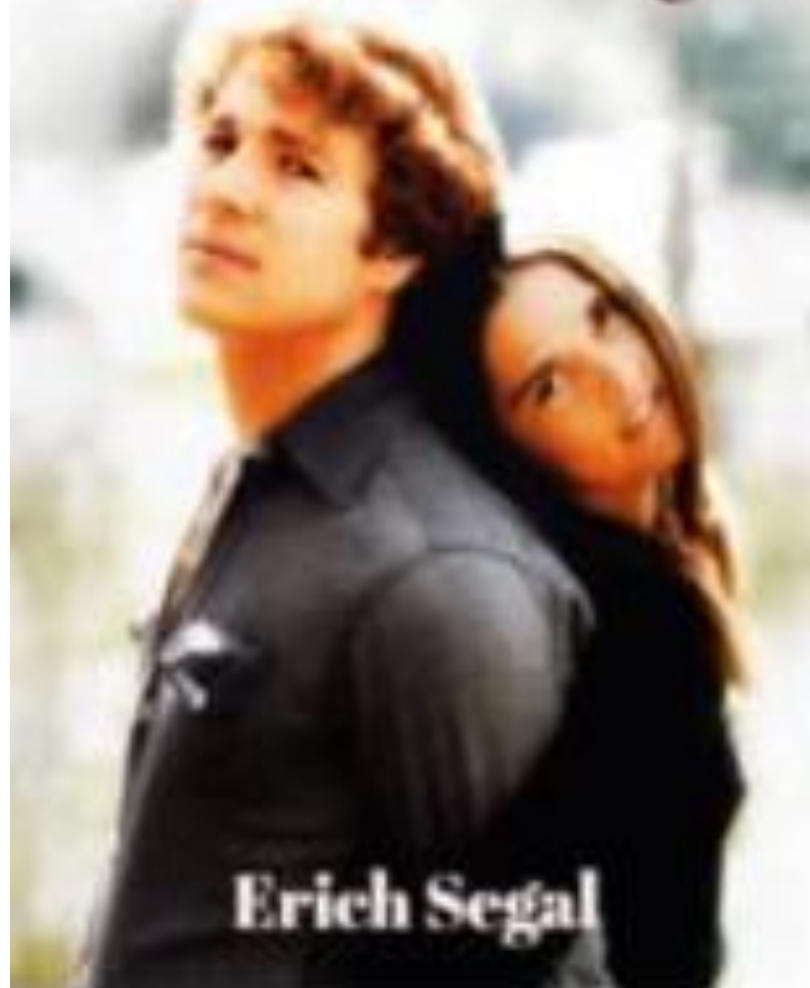
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Love
Story



Erich Segal

Love Story Part 2

By Erich Segal

CHAPTER FOUR

Two different kinds of father

'Jenny he isn't going to be President of the USA, after all!'

We were driving back to Harvard.

'You still weren't very nice to him about it, Oliver.'

'I said, "Well done"!'!

'Ha! Oliver, why are you so unkind to your father? You hurt him all the time.'

'It's impossible to hurt Oliver Barrett the Third.'

'No, it isn't - if you marry Jennifer Cavilleri... Oliver, I know you love me. But in a strange way you want me because I'm not a suitable woman for a Barrett to marry. You are rebelling against your father.'

My father said the same thing a few days later when we had lunch together at the Harvard Club in Boston.

'Son, you're in too much of a hurry. The young lady herself is fine. The problem is you. You are rebelling, and you know it.'

'Father, what worries you most about her? That she's Italian? Or that she's poor?'

'What do you like most about her?'

'I'm leaving.'

'Stay and talk like a man.' I stayed. Old Stony face liked that. He's won again, I thought angrily.

'Wait a while, son,' Oliver Barrett the Third continued. 'That's all I ask. Finish law school.'

'Why do I have to wait?' I was rebelling now.

'Oliver, you are still under twenty-one. In the eyes of the law you are not yet an adult.'

'Stop talking like a lawyer, dammit!'

'If you marry her now, you will get nothing from me.'

'Father, you've got nothing that I want.'

I walked out of his club and out of his life.

After that, I was not looking forward to meeting Jenny's father. She was his only child and her mother was dead. She meant a lot to him... I could see a lot of problems there. And I was penniless. How is Mr Cavilleri going to feel, I thought, when he hears that young Barrett can't support his daughter? Worse, she will have to work as a teacher to support him while he is at law school!

As we drove down to Cranston on that Sunday in May, I worried a lot about Mr Cavilleri's feelings.

'Tell me again, Jen.'

'OK. I telephoned him, and he said OK.'

'But what does he mean by "OK"?''

'Are you trying to tell me that Harvard Law School has accepted a man who doesn't know the meaning of "OK"?''

'It isn't a word that lawyers use much, Jen. Just tell me again. Please.'

'He knows you're poor, and he doesn't mind. Stop worrying, Oliver.'

Jenny lived on Hamilton Street. It was a long line of wooden houses with children playing in front of them, and whole families sitting on their front steps. I felt like a stranger in a strange land as I parked the MG outside 189A Hamilton Street. Mr Cavilleri's handshake was warm and strong.

'How do you do, sir?' I said.

'I'm Phil,' he said.

'Phil, sir.' It was a frightening moment. Then Mr Cavilleri turned to his daughter. Suddenly they were in each other's arms, laughing and crying and kissing. I felt like a stranger.

For some time I did not have to speak much. 'Don't speak with your mouth full,' my family had told me when I was a child. Phil and his daughter kept my mouth full all afternoon. I don't know how many Italian cakes I ate. Both Cavilleri's were very pleased.

'He's OK,' said Phil at last.

'I told you he was OK,' said his daughter.

'Well, I had to see for myself. Now I've seen him. Oliver -'

'Yes, sir?'

'Call me Phil. You're OK.'

Later Phil tried to have a serious talk with me. He thought he could bring Oliver Barrett the Third and Oliver Barrett the Fourth together again.

'Let me speak to him on the telephone,' he said. 'A father's love is a very special thing...'

'There isn't much of it in my family,' I said.

'Your father will soon realize,' he began. 'When it's time to go to the church -'

'Phil,' said Jenny gently, 'we don't want to be married in church.'

He looked surprised, then unhappy. But he spoke bravely.

'It's your wedding, children. You choose. It's OK by me.'

My next meeting was with the Head of Harvard Law School.

'I'll need a scholarship for next year, sir,' I said politely.

'A scholarship? I don't understand. Your father -'

'My father has nothing to do with it, sir. We've had a disagreement, and he isn't supporting me anymore.' The Head took off his glasses, then put them on again. I continued, 'That's why I've come here to see you, sir. I'm getting married next month. We're both going to work during the summer. Then Jenny will support us by teaching. But her teaching won't pay enough to send me to law school. Sir, I need a scholarship. I have no money in the bank.'

'Mr Barrett, our scholarships are for poor people. And it's too late to ask for one. I do not wish to enter into a family disagreement, but I think you should go and talk to your father again.'

'Oh no!' I said angrily. 'I am not, repeat not, going back to my father to ask for money!'

When Jenny graduated from university that summer, all her relations came from Cranston to watch. We didn't tell them about our marriage plans because we wanted a quiet wedding, and didn't want to hurt their feelings. I graduated from Harvard the next day. Was Oliver the Third there in the university hall? I don't know. I didn't look for Old Stony face in the crowd. I gave my parents' tickets to Jenny and Phil, but as an old Harvard man, my father could sit with the Class of 26. But why should he want to? I mean, weren't the banks open that day?

The wedding was on the next Sunday. It was very quiet and very beautiful. Phil was there, of course, and my friend Ray Stratton. Jenny and I spoke about our love for each other and promised to stay together until death. Ray gave me the ring and soon Oliver Barrett the Fourth and Jennifer Cavilleri were man and wife.

We had a small party afterwards, just the four of us. Then Ray and Phil went home and Jenny and I were alone together.

'Jenny, we're really married!'

'Yes. Now I can be as terrible to you as I like!'

CHAPTER FIVE

The first three years

For three years, we had to make every dollar do the work of two. All through the summer holidays we worked at the Boat Club in Dennis Port. It was hard work, but we were never too tired to be kind to each other. I say 'kind' because there are no words to describe our love and happiness together.

After the summer, we found a 'cheap' flat near the university. It was on the top floor of an old house and was actually very expensive. But what could we do? There weren't many flats around.

'Hey, Preppie,' said Jenny when we arrived there. 'Are you my husband or aren't you?'

'Of course I'm your husband.'

'Show me, then.' (My God, I thought, in the street?) 'Carry me into our first home!'

I carried her up the five steps to the front door.

'Why did you stop?' she asked. 'This isn't our home. Upstairs, Preppie!'

There were twenty-four stairs up to our flat, and I had to stop halfway.

'Why are you so heavy?' I asked her.

'Perhaps I'm expecting a baby.'

'My God! Are you?'

'Ha! I frightened you then, didn't I?'

'Well, yes, just for a second or two.'

I carried her the rest of the way. There were very few moments in those days when we were not worrying about money. Very few, and very wonderful - and that moment was one of them.

A food shop let us 'eat now, pay later', thanks to the Barrett name. But our famous name did not help us in Jenny's work. The Head of the school thought we were rich.

'Of course, we can't pay our teachers very much,' said Miss Whitman. 'But that won't worry you, Mrs Barrett!'

Jenny tried to explain that Barrett's had to eat, just like other people. Miss Whitman just laughed politely.

'Don't worry,' Jenny said to me. 'We'll manage. Just learn to like spaghetti.'

I did. I learned to like spaghetti and Jenny learned lots of different ways of cooking it. With Jenny's pay from school, and our money from our summer work and my holiday jobs, we managed. Our lives had changed a lot, of course. There was no more music for Jenny. She had to teach all day, and came home very tired. Then she had to cook dinner - restaurants were too expensive for us. There were a lot of films that we didn't see, and places and people that we didn't visit. But we were doing OK.

One day a beautiful invitation arrived. It was for my father's sixtieth birthday party.

'Well?' said Jenny. I was in the middle of a thick law book and did not hear her at first. 'Oliver, he's reaching out to you.'

'No, he isn't. My mother wrote it. Now be quiet. I'm studying. I've got exams in three weeks.'

'Ollie, think. Sixty years old, dammit. How do you know that he'll still be alive when you decide to forget your disagreement?'

'I don't know, and I don't care. Now let me get on with my work!'

'One day,' said Jenny, 'when you're having problems with Oliver the Fifth -'

'Our son won't be called Oliver, you can be sure of that!' I said angrily.

'You can call him Bozo if you like. But that child will feel bad about you, because you were a big Harvard sportsman. And by the time he goes to university, you'll probably be a big, important lawyer!' She continued, 'Oliver, your father loves you, in the same way as you will love Bozo. But you Barrett's are so full of pride - you'll go through life thinking that you hate each other. Now... what about that invitation?'

'Write them a nice letter of refusal.'

'Oliver, I can't hurt your father like that... What's their telephone number?'

I told her and was at once deep in my law book again. I tried not to listen to her talking on the telephone, but she was in the same room, after all. Suddenly I thought how long does it take to say no?

'Ollie?' Jenny had her hand over the telephone mouthpiece. 'Ollie, do we have to say no?'

'Yes, we do. And hurry up, dammit!'

'I'm terribly sorry,' she said into the telephone. She covered the mouthpiece again and turned to me. 'He's very unhappy, Oliver! Can you just sit there and let your father bleed?'

'Stones don't bleed, Jen. This isn't one of your warm, loving Italian fathers.'

'Oliver, can't you just speak to him?'

'Speak to him! Are you crazy?'

She held the telephone towards me. She was trying not to cry.

'I will never speak to him. Ever,' I said.

Now she was crying, very quietly. Then she asked me once more. 'For me, Oliver. I've never asked you for anything. Please.'

I couldn't do it. Didn't Jenny understand? It was just impossible. Unhappily, I shook my head. Then Jenny spoke to me quietly and very angrily. 'You have no heart,' she said.

She spoke into the telephone again. 'Mr Barrett, Oliver wants you to know...' She was crying, so it wasn't easy for her. 'Oliver loves you very much,' she said, and put the telephone down quickly.

I don't know why I did it. Perhaps I went crazy for a moment. Violently I took the telephone and threw it across the room.

'Damn you, Jenny! Why don't you get out of my life?'

I stood still for a second. My God, I thought, what's happening to me? I turned to look at Jenny. But she had gone.

I looked round the flat for her. Her coat was still there, but she had disappeared.

I ran out of the house and searched everywhere for her: the law school library, Radcliffe, the music school. Was she in one of the music rooms? I heard somebody playing the piano, loudly and very badly. Was it Jenny? I pushed the door open. A big Radcliffe girl was at the piano.

'What's the matter?' she asked.

'Nothing,' I answered, and closed the door again.

Where, oh where, had she gone? I felt terrible. I searched the university, the streets and the cafes. Nothing. Had she taken a bus to Cranston, perhaps? At midnight, I found a telephone box and called Phil.

'Hello?' he said sleepily. 'What's the matter? Is Jenny ill?'

My God, I thought, she isn't there! 'She's fine, Phil. Uh - I just called to say hello.'

'You should call more often, dammit,' he said. 'Is Cranston so far away that you can't come down on a Sunday afternoon?'

'We'll come, some Sunday, Phil, I promise.'

'Don't give me that - "some Sunday" indeed! This Sunday, Oliver.'

'Yes, sir. This Sunday.'

'And next time you telephone, I'll pay, dammit. OK?' He put down the telephone. I stood there and wondered what to do. At last, I went back to the flat.

Jenny was sitting on the top step. I was too tired to cry, too glad to speak.

'I forgot my key,' said Jenny.

I stood there on the bottom step. I was afraid to ask how long she had been there. I only knew that I had hurt her terribly.

'Jenny, I'm sorry -'

'Stop!' she said. Then she added, 'Love means you never have to say you're sorry.'

We walked up to our flat. As we undressed, she looked lovingly at me.

'I meant what I said, Oliver.'

And that was all.

CHAPTER SIX

Money can't buy everything

When the letter came from the Law School, it changed our lives. I came third in the final examinations and suddenly everyone wanted to offer me jobs. It was a wonderful time. Think of it: an all-American boy with a famous name, third in his examinations and a Harvard hockey player too. Crowds of people were fighting to get my name and number on their company writing paper.

At last, I accepted a job with Jonas and Marsh in New York. I was the highest-paid graduate of my year too. After three years of spaghetti and looking twice at every dollar, it felt wonderful.

We moved to a beautiful flat in New York. Jonas and Marsh's office was an easy ten-minute walk away. And there were lots of fashionable shops nearby too. I told my wife to get in there and start spending immediately.

'Why, Oliver?'

'Woman, you supported me for three years. Now it's my turn!'

I joined the Harvard Club of New York. Ray Stratton was working in New York too and we played tennis together three times a week. My old Harvard friends discovered me once more, and invitations arrived.

'Say no, Oliver. I don't want to spend my free time with a lot of empty-headed preppies.'

'OK, Jen, but what shall I tell them?'

'Tell them I'm expecting a baby.'

'Are you?'

She smiled. 'No, but if we stay at home tonight, perhaps I will.'

We already had a name for our child.

'You know,' I said one evening. 'I really like the name Bozo.'

'You honestly want to call our child Bozo?'

'Yes. It's the name of a big sports star. He'll be wonderfully big and strong,' I continued. 'Bozo Barrett, Harvard's biggest football star.'

We had a name for our child and we wanted him very much. But it's not always easy to make a baby, although we tried very hard. Finally I became worried and we went together to see a doctor.

Doctor Sheppard checked everything carefully. He took some of our blood and sent it away for examination. 'We'll know soon,' he said.

A few days later, he telephoned me at my office and asked me to visit him on my way home that evening.

'Well, Doctor,' I said, 'which of us has the problem?'

'It's Jenny,' he said. 'She will never have children.'

I was ready for this news, but it still shook me. 'Well,' I said, 'children aren't everything.'

'Oliver,' said Doctor Sheppard, 'the problem is more serious than that. Jenny is very ill. She has a blood disease. It is destroying her blood, and we can't stop it. She is dying, Oliver. I am very sorry.'

'That's impossible, Doctor,' I said. I waited for the doctor to tell me that it was not true.

Kindly and patiently, he explained again, and at last, I understood the terrible words.

'Have you spoken to Jenny, Doctor? What did you tell her?'

'I told her that you were both all right. For the moment it's better that way.'

I wanted to shout and scream at the unfairness of it all. Jenny was twenty-four, and she was dying. 'What can I do to help, Doctor?' I asked at last.

'Just be natural,' he said.

'Natural!

I began to think about God. At first, I hated Him. Then next morning I woke up and Jenny was there beside me. Still there. I was ashamed. Thank you, God, I thought. Thank you for letting me wake up and see Jennifer.

'Be natural,' the doctor had said. I did my best, and all the time I was living with my terrible secret.

One day Mr Jonas called me into his office. 'Oliver, I have an important job for you. How soon can you go to Chicago? You can take one of the younger men with you.'

One of the younger men? I was the youngest man in the office. I understood the message: Oliver, although you are still only twenty-four, you are one of our top men.

'Thank you, sir,' I said, 'but I can't leave New York just now.'

I had decided not to tell anyone about my troubles. I wanted to keep my secret as long as possible. I could see that old man Jonas was unhappy about my refusal.

On the way home that day I saw a notice in a travel shop window: 'Fly to Paris!' Suddenly I remembered Jenny's words: What about my scholarship? What about Paris?

I went into the shop and bought two tickets to Paris.

Jenny was looking grey and tired when I got home. When I showed her the tickets, she shook her head.

'Oliver,' she said gently, 'I don't want Paris. I just want you... and I want time, which you can't give me.'

Now I looked in her eyes and saw the sadness in them. We sat there silently, holding each other. Then Jenny explained.

'I was feeling terrible. I went back to the doctor and he told me. I'm dying.'

Now I didn't have to be 'natural' any more. We had no more secrets from each other. Now we could discuss things... things that young husbands and wives don't usually have to discuss.

'You must be strong, Oliver,' she said. 'For Phil. It's going to be hard for him. He needs your help. OK?'

'OK. I'll be strong,' I promised. I hoped Jenny could not see how frightened I was.

A month later, just after dinner, Jenny was playing Chopin on the piano. Suddenly she stopped.

'Are you rich enough to pay for a taxi?' she asked.

'Of course. Where do you want to go?'

'To the hospital.'

In the next few busy, worried moments, while I hurriedly packed a bag, I realized. This is it, I thought. Jenny is going to walk out of this flat and never come back. I wondered what she was thinking. She sat there, looking straight in front of her.

'Hey,' I said, 'is there anything special that you want to take with you?'

'No,' she said. Then she thought again. 'Yes. You.'

The taxi-driver thought Jenny was expecting a baby. 'Is this your first?' he asked.

I was holding Jenny in my arms, and I felt ready to explode.

'Please, Ollie,' Jenny said to me softly. 'He's trying to be nice to us.'

'Yes,' I told the driver. 'It's our first. And my wife isn't feeling very well. So can you hurry, please?'

He got us to the hospital in ten minutes. 'Good luck!' he called as he drove away. Jenny thanked him.

She was having trouble walking. I wanted to carry her. But she said clearly, 'Not this time, Preppie.' So we walked.

'Have you got health insurance?' they asked us in the hospital.

'No.' we had never thought about buying insurance. We were too busy buying furniture and kitchen things.

Of course, the doctors knew about Jenny and they were expecting us.

'Listen,' I told them. 'Do your best for Jenny. I don't care what it costs. I want her to have the best, please. I've got the money.'

CHAPTER SEVEN

Strongmen don't cry

I jumped into my MG and drove through the night to Boston. I changed my shirt in the car before I entered the offices on State Street. It was only eight o'clock in the morning, but several important-looking people were waiting to see Oliver Barrett the Third. His secretary recognized me and spoke my name into the telephone. My father did not say 'Show him in'. Instead, the door opened and he came out to meet me.

'Oliver,' he said. His hair was a little greyer and his face had lost some of its colour. 'Come in, son,' he said. I walked into his office and sat down opposite him.

For a moment, we looked at each other. Then he looked away, and so did I. I looked at the things on his desk: the scissors, the penholder, the letter-opener, the photos of my mother and me.

'How have you been, son?' he asked.

'Very well, sir... Father, I need to borrow five thousand dollars.'

He looked hard at me. 'May I know the reason?' he said at last.

'I can't tell you, Father. Just lend me the money. Please.' I felt that he didn't want to refuse, or argue with me. He wanted to give me the money, but he also wanted to... talk. 'Don't they pay you at Jonas and Marsh?'

'Yes, sir.' So he knows where I work, I thought. He probably knows how much they pay me too.

'And doesn't Jennifer teach too?' Well, I thought, he doesn't know everything.

'Please leave Jennifer out of this. Father. This is a personal matter. A very important personal matter.'

'Have you got a girl into trouble?' he asked quietly.

'Yes,' I lied. 'That's it. Now give me the money. Please.'

I think he knew that I was lying. But I don't think he wanted to know my real reason for wanting the money. He was asking because he wanted to... talk.

He took out his chequebook and opened it slowly. Not to hurt me, I'm sure, but to give himself time. Time to find things to say. Things that would not hurt the two of us.

He finished writing the cheque, took it out of the chequebook and held it out towards me. When I did not reach out my hand to take it, he pulled back his hand and placed the cheque on his desk. He looked at me again. Here it is, son, the look on his face seemed to say. But still he did not speak.

I did not want to leave, either. But I couldn't think of anything painless to say. And we couldn't sit there, wanting to talk but unable to look at each other.

I picked up the cheque and put it carefully into my shirt pocket. I got up and went towards the door. I wanted to thank my father for seeing me, when several important people were waiting outside his office. If I want, I thought, he will send his visitors away, just to be with me... I wanted to thank him for that, but the words refused to come. I stood there with the door half open, and at last, I managed to look at him and say:

'Thank you, Father.'

Then I had to tell Phil Cavilleri. He did not cry or say anything. He quietly closed his house in Cranston and came to live in our flat. We all have ways of living with our troubles. Some people drink too much. Phil cleaned the flat, again and again. Perhaps he thought Jenny would come home again. Poor Phil.

Next, I telephoned old man Jonas. I told him why I could not come into the office. I kept the conversation short because I knew he was unhappy. He wanted to say things to me, but could not find the words. I knew all about that.

Phil and I lived for hospital visiting hours. The rest of life - eating and sleeping (or not sleeping) - meant nothing to us. One day, in the flat, I heard Phil saying, very quietly, 'I can't take this much longer.' I did not answer him. I just thought to myself, I can take it. Dear God, I can take it as long as You want - because Jenny is Jenny.

That evening, she sent me out of her room. She wanted to speak to her father, 'man to man'. 'But don't go too far away,' she added.

I went to sit outside. Then Phil appeared. 'She wants to see you now,' he said.

'Close the door,' Jenny ordered. 'I went to sit by her bed.' I always liked to sit beside her and look at her face, because it had her eyes shining in it.

'It doesn't hurt, Ollie, really,' she said. 'It's like falling off a high building very slowly - you know?'

Something moved deep inside me. I am not going to cry, I said to myself. I'm strong, OK? And strong men don't cry... But if I'm not going to cry, then I can't open my mouth. 'Mm,' I said.

'No, you don't know, Preppie,' she said. 'You've never fallen off a high building in your life.'

'Yes, I have.' My voice came back. 'I did when I met you.'

She smiled. 'Who cares about Paris?' she said suddenly. 'Paris, music, all that. You think you stole it from me, don't you? I can see it in your face. Well, I don't care, you stupid Preppie. Can't you accept that?'

'No,' I answered honestly.

'Then get out of here!' she said angrily. 'I don't want you at my damn death-bed.'

'OK, I accept it,' I said.

'That's better. Now - will you do something for me?' From somewhere inside me came this sudden, violent need to cry. But I was strong. I was not going to cry.

'Mm,' I said again.

'Will you please hold me, Oliver?'

I put my hand on her arm - oh God, she was so thin - and held it.

'No, Oliver,' she said. 'Really hold me. Put your arms round me.'

Very, very carefully I got onto the bed and put my arms round her.

'Thanks, Ollie.'

Those were her last words.

Phil Cavilleri was waiting outside. 'Phil?' I said softly. He looked up and I think he already knew. I walked over and put my hand on his arm.

'I won't cry,' he said quietly. 'I'm going to be strong for you. I promised Jenny.' He touched my hand very gently.

But I had to be alone. To feel the night air. To take a walk, perhaps.

Downstairs, the entrance hall of the hospital was very calm and quiet. The only noise was the sound of my footsteps on the hard floor.

'Oliver.'

It was my father. Except for the woman at the desk, we were all alone there. I could not speak to him. I went straight towards the door. But in a moment he was out there, standing beside me.

'Oliver,' he said. 'Why didn't you tell me?'

It was very cold. That was good, because I wanted to feel something. My father continued to speak to me, while I stood still and felt the cold wind on my face.

'I heard this evening. I jumped into the car at once.'

I was not wearing a coat. The cold was starting to make me ache. Good. Good.

'Oliver,' said my father. 'I want to help.'

'Jenny's dead,' I told him.

'I'm sorry,' he said very softly.

I don't know why I did it. But I repeated Jenny's words from long ago.

'Love means you never have to say you're sorry.'

Then I did something, which I had never done in front of him before. My father put his arms round me, and I cried.