BookGist Summary

...Can Come True.

by Darin TaDream

Key Takeaways

• Second chances require more than longing: Red and Cindy must confront the choices, misunderstandings, and emotional injuries that separated them before they can build a future.

• Grief can become entangled with guilt. Red's recurring crash nightmares reflect his belief that he was responsible for his family's deaths, and his recovered dream helps him begin releasing that burden.

• Romance is expressed through attention to personal meaning, not simply grand gestures. The yellow roses, remembered prom corsage, diamond-chip ring, and private vows matter because they belong to Red and Cindy's shared history.

• The personas people adopt can be useful but may also obscure their authentic selves. Red's polished public identity as Darin TaDream helps him navigate celebrity, yet Cindy needs to understand and reconnect with the quieter man beneath it.

• Patience and consent are essential to rebuilding intimacy. Red gives Cindy room to choose whether to reconnect, and their renewed physical relationship develops only when she clearly expresses that she is ready.

• Community can be a powerful source of support. Red's small town, his friend Donna, his agent Mary, and the people helping with the reunion all contribute practical care and emotional encouragement.

• The novel contrasts fame and luxury with the peace of ordinary life. Red's public success enables the elaborate reunion, but the couple's lasting happiness is rooted in

companionship, nature, work, and home.

• Creativity can turn private feelings into action. Red first writes the reunion as a romance, then uses the story's detailed plan as a guide to take a vulnerable real-life risk.

• Forgiveness moves in both directions: Cindy asks Red to forgive the breakup, while Red must also forgive himself for surviving the crash and for believing he caused his family's deaths.

• Hope is presented as something to act on, not merely wish for. The story's romantic optimism is grounded in honest conversations, deliberate choices, and a willingness to face rejection.

Who Should Read This Book

Can Come True is well suited to readers who enjoy second-chance romance, emotionally expressive storytelling, and plots in which old memories shape present-day choices. Readers interested in bereavement, survivor's guilt, forgiveness, and the tension between a public identity and a private self will also find a substantial emotional arc alongside the romance. The book's small-town setting, close friendships, professional show-business world, and elaborate courtship plan give it both intimate and theatrical dimensions. Readers who like sweeping romantic gestures will appreciate the weekly roses, poetic clues, knight-and-squire reveal, and carefully planned reunion, while those who prefer grounded emotional detail may connect most with Red and Cindy's conversations about regret, faith, and the life they might have shared. Compared with romances built primarily around instant attraction or external obstacles, this story places unusual weight on a decades-old relationship, grief, and the practical work of rediscovering one another. It is best for readers comfortable with a highly sentimental tone, idealized romantic scenes, and a hopeful, fairy-tale-inflected ending.

Chapter Summaries

Prologue

Cindy, a gifted programmer under punishing workplace deadlines, finds momentary comfort in memories of walking through the woods with a young man whose face and name she has deliberately blocked out. She has built an emotional barrier around the grief associated with him, but the memory of his hand still gives her a sense of safety and tenderness. Feeling empty despite her career and other commitments, Cindy longs for a loving, uncomplicated life and wonders where the person who could provide it might be. Her wistful question about a knight in shining armor establishes the fairy-tale motif that will frame the story's reunion.

Chapter One

Robert Edward Dailacowski, known publicly as romance author Darin TaDream and privately as Red, completes a manuscript after writing almost nonstop for three days. His agent, Mary, calls to check on him and discovers how badly he has neglected sleep, food, and basic care. Red admits that the new story is based on a fantasy he has carried for years: finding Cindy, his high-school sweetheart, and trying to recover their lost love. After the call, Red falls asleep and relives the airplane crash that killed his wife, Jenny, and their children. He wakes in terror, as he has repeatedly since the disaster, then turns to familiar routines and the quiet support of his South Carolina town. Donna, a close friend who has helped him survive his bereavement, encourages him to consider pursuing Cindy but warns him to prepare for rejection.

Chapter Two

Red decides to hire a private investigator to find Cindy, calling his brother for a recommendation. As he prepares for sleep, memories carry him back to the first day he met her in high school. At lunch, Cindy asks him to remove his mirrored sunglasses, and when he does, their eye contact creates an immediate, powerful connection. The pair walk together after school, talk easily, and share a tender first kiss in the woods. Their closeness feels natural to Red, who remembers the day as the beginning of an unusually profound love. The chapter establishes the memories and details that will later become clues in Red’s elaborate plan to reconnect with her.

Chapter Three

Red travels on a publicity tour for his books, moving between his private life and the practiced, polished persona required of Darin TaDream. During the flight, he contacts investigator Patrick Cott and gives him Cindy’s name, background, and a photograph, asking for her address, relationship status, and work routine. He wants to approach her only if she is available and arranges to meet Cott when he returns to the Baltimore area. The book tour shows both the benefits and pressures of Red’s success: celebrity access, organized appearances, and growing public demand, but little time for rest or privacy. When Cott later reports that Cindy is at work and apparently reachable, Red is elated. He asks for help locating an event planner, signaling that he intends to create a carefully staged romantic approach rather than simply call her.

Chapter Four

Red meets Cott, receives recent photographs of Cindy, and hires event planner Anna Sheldon to carry out a twelve-week sequence of rose deliveries and poetic clues. Mary worries that Red is confusing a romance novel with real life, but ultimately agrees to support him while reminding him that Cindy may reject him. Red’s plan is designed to give Cindy time to wonder about the sender before he reveals himself. Red also plants the idea of a cast party with film executive Paul Carson, arranging for it to coincide with a key moment in his reunion plan. A

memory of giving Cindy a small diamond-chip ring reinforces the emotional history behind the gesture. Back home, Red tells Donna that Anna will carry out the plan over the coming weeks, while Donna urges him not to confuse a hopeful story with a guaranteed outcome.

Chapter Five

Red studies the new photographs of Cindy and begins coordinating the events that will support the reunion, including future movie publicity and a possible cast gathering. He tries to keep busy with writing and plans to buy the local building-supply store, both to provide meaningful work and to prevent himself from rushing the romantic plan. Cindy receives the first yellow rose at her home from a costumed squire arriving in a white limousine. The unsigned verse hints at a former love and a relationship she once rejected, leaving her puzzled but intrigued. Red secretly watches from a rented car, observing that the delivery moves her. He hopes she will recognize the significance of the rose, which recalls the miniature yellow roses he gave her before their junior prom.

Chapter Six

A week of waiting makes Red restless and disrupts his ability to focus. Meanwhile, Cindy receives two more yellow roses and a new verse, then discusses the deliveries with her friend Joanna. Joanna sees contradictions in the anonymous admirer's message, while Cindy finds the mystery increasingly romantic and starts listing possible men from her past. The clues prompt Cindy to revisit memories she would rather keep sealed, including a former partner whose eyes and manner once stirred strong feelings. She compares the anonymous verses with a Darin TaDream romance, recognizing a familiar pattern of love, loss, and attempted reconciliation. Red, meanwhile, remembers a peaceful day with Cindy at a lake and reflects on how deeply he still idealizes and respects her.

Chapter Seven

Red agrees to buy the building-supply business, settling on an October transition with its owner. The decision gives him a practical future beyond writing and celebrity, though his thoughts remain fixed on the reunion. At Cindy's home, the weekly delivery continues with three roses and a verse that refers to a memorable smile and a request to see the sender's eyes. Cindy and Joanna try to interpret the new clue, and Cindy compares it with past relationships. Several men seem plausible, but none fits all the details. Red's memories deepen his understanding of the relationship: he recalls how intimacy with Cindy was rooted in tenderness and trust, and how painful it was to learn that their hoped-for first sexual experience together never happened.

Chapter Eight

Red uses a relaxation technique to revisit a dream connected to the crash. In the dream, he is an airplane losing control and descending toward a highway, where a collision kills the people

inside a car. The imagery reveals his subconscious sense of responsibility for the deaths of Jenny and the children, a conviction that has fueled his nightmares and survivor's guilt. The dream then changes: the family's spirits tell him that the crash was not his fault and that he still has a life to live, including love yet to be found. Red wakes sobbing, but the emotional experience feels different from his usual terror and brings some relief. Donna comforts him, takes him walking through the woods, and helps him notice the natural world and a young fawn, giving him a renewed sense of life and possibility.

Chapter Nine

Cindy hosts a baby shower for her coworker Diana, and the mystery roses become a topic of conversation among the guests. A new delivery arrives during the party, but Cindy redirects attention to Diana and her gifts. When the evening ends, she reads the verse, which refers to promises and vows and revives memories of a private commitment she once made with Red before a Christmas tree. At work, Cindy posts the accumulated verses so her coworkers can stop interrupting her, turning the mystery into a shared puzzle. The experience of the baby shower also intensifies her sadness about being unable to conceive. Later, she learns that her friend Joanna is pregnant, then volunteers at an orphanage and holds a newborn girl, confronting both her longing for a child and the grief surrounding the future she imagined.

Chapter Ten

The rose deliveries continue, and Cindy grows increasingly focused on identifying their sender. A verse about a first tender kiss narrows her guesses but does not resolve the mystery. When her old friend Sally visits, they discuss Cindy's former relationships and the clues; Sally observes that the sender may be someone from much earlier in Cindy's life, though she avoids naming Red because she knows those memories are painful. Sally suggests that the sender's carefully controlled anonymity and poetic clues are meant to build anticipation, and Cindy begins to accept that she may have to wait for the reveal. The weekly deliveries become a workplace guessing game, with coworkers pooling money on who can best predict each verse. Cindy participates in the humor, even as the mystery continues to touch a vulnerable part of her past.

Chapter Eleven

Red continues his publicity tour and prepares for the next stage of the plan. He speaks candidly with flight attendant Loni, recognizing her interest in him but kindly explaining that he is pursuing Cindy and values Loni as a friend. Loni accepts the boundary and offers to help make Cindy comfortable if she joins them later. Mary raises a practical concern: Cindy will be exposed to a crowd of reporters at the cast party and could be overwhelmed. Red agrees to arrange security and an escorted entrance. At home, Cindy receives more roses and a verse that reassures her the sender is not nearby. The squire's partial information—that the sender is from South Carolina—adds another clue, while Cindy remains uncertain and increasingly

invested.

Chapter Twelve

Donna questions Red about how he can write another story while living through the emotionally charged plan of his current one. Red admits that writing allows him to express and organize his feelings, while the actual reunion must unfold at its own pace. Donna persuades him to go dancing, where his public persona emerges and he unexpectedly attracts attention from readers who recognize him as Darin TaDream. Cindy receives ten roses and a verse about renewed love, while dealing with the pain of Joanna's miscarriage and her own unfulfilled hopes for motherhood. She agrees to join Joanna, Fred, and Fred's brother Pat for dinner. At the gathering, Pat reveals that he is the investigator who found Cindy for the anonymous sender, but contractual confidentiality prevents him from naming the man. He does tell her the sender is successful and has made a name for himself, leaving Cindy more curious than ever.

Chapter Thirteen

Red prepares for the decisive day, reflecting on the high-school breakup and the choices that led to it. He remembers working several jobs to save for a house he hoped to share with Cindy, while their schedules increasingly kept them apart. When she ended the relationship, he left without explaining the full plan or asking them to work through the problem, a decision he has regretted for decades. Red arrives at Cindy's workplace dressed as a knight, carrying roses and a scroll that recounts their shared memories. The scroll is designed to remind her of their first meeting, their school days, the prom corsage, the diamond-chip ring, and their private vows. While Red waits in armor, Cindy enters the cafeteria unaware that the stranger she has been trying to identify is about to appear.

Chapter Fourteen

The knight approaches Cindy in front of her coworkers and gives her a dozen yellow roses and the long scroll. As she reads, each detail unlocks more of her suppressed memories: the school clothes and dances, their shared intimacy, the prom roses, the ring, and the vows they made privately before God. The emotional wall she built around Red begins to melt, and she realizes the sender must be him. Cindy answers the scroll's three choices by saying yes and asking for Red immediately. Red's excitement nearly overwhelms him, but he remains in character long enough to invite her to come with him. As he leads her out and removes his helmet, he reveals himself. Cindy embraces him, apologizes for ending their relationship, and promises she does not want to lose him again.

Chapter Fifteen

Just as Red and Cindy reunite, a reader recognizes the knight as Darin TaDream. Red fears the revelation will disrupt the moment and asks Cindy not to pull away. He explains that he is

indeed the famous author, then discreetly handles the reader, Doris, asking her not to tell Cindy about the book until he has had time to explain its connection to their lives. Red arranges a formal dinner that evening and introduces Cindy to Anna, who will guide her through the rest of the day. Cindy is stunned to discover that her long-lost sweetheart is also the author whose romances she has admired. Though she is overwhelmed by the sudden changes, Red reassures her that they will have time to talk privately and promises that his public commitments will not replace their relationship.

Chapter Sixteen

Anna takes Cindy shopping for clothes, beginning with elegant leisurewear, swimwear, lingerie, shoes, and accessories. Cindy is initially uncomfortable with the scale and expense of the arrangements, but she gradually enjoys choosing clothing that makes her feel attractive and confident. The centerpiece is a custom gown designed specifically for her by a celebrated fashion house, an unexpectedly personal detail that reveals the care behind Red's plans. At a renowned beauty resort, Cindy receives a full day of treatments and preparations. She learns that Red arranged much more than a simple dinner outfit, and Anna explains that the extravagance is meant to make Cindy feel cared for, not bought. While Red handles film-rights negotiations, he worries about whether Cindy will feel comfortable in his celebrity world; Anna reassures him that Cindy still loves the private man she calls Red.

Chapter Seventeen

Cindy's day of pampering continues with a mud bath, steam room, massage, and hair and makeup appointments. She treats the staff with warmth, particularly Janice, whose mood brightens when Cindy listens and responds kindly. During the treatments, Cindy hears that others admire Darin's work and begins to understand how his public reputation shapes the world she is entering. At the styling salon, Cindy reveals that she has a dinner date with Darin TaDream and recounts the twelve weeks of roses and verses. Her gown and hairstyle are completed with care, and the final look leaves her feeling beautiful without losing the familiar femininity Red prefers. The chapter shows how Cindy's confidence grows as she accepts the attention while keeping her own preferences and personality intact.

Chapter Eighteen

Cindy is driven to Red's private suite, where she discovers the glamorous scale of his professional life. Before flying to New Jersey, she stops at her home to retrieve the diamond-chip ring he gave her decades earlier. Wearing it again becomes a quiet declaration that she values their history more than any luxury arranged for the evening. On the flight, Loni explains the difference between Red's private nature and the more polished Darin persona, and Cindy shares how Red's eyes first made her fall in love with him. She arrives at the Cooper Pronghorn Complex and is shown into an elegant suite, where she is offered borrowed jewelry for the evening. Cindy accepts the experience but refuses to replace the ring

on her left hand, insisting that its emotional worth exceeds the value of the jewels.

Chapter Nineteen

Cindy enters a crowded studio event and is escorted through a hallway packed with reporters. At the formal dinner, Darin introduces her publicly as his high-school sweetheart and the inspiration for his latest book, welcoming her to a room full of executives, performers, and filmmakers. Though she feels intimidated by the attention, his pride and steady gaze help her remain composed. The guests watch a film adaptation of one of Darin's novels, then move to a celebration. Cindy observes how effortlessly Darin remembers people and makes them feel valued, but she also notices the contrast between his public confidence and the softer Red she remembers. When she joins a group of spouses, she learns they too are fascinated by his books and by the possibility that the latest story draws on real events.

Chapter Twenty

To manage the press, Darin gives a young reporter, Sue Ann Holmes, an exclusive account of the reunion. He introduces Cindy as his first true love and explains that he has found her again, while asking Sue Ann to use the book as background without spoiling its contents. The exchange gives Cindy a glimpse of how Darin handles publicity: he is strategic and polished, but he tries to protect her from being misrepresented. In the limousine afterward, Cindy challenges him about the separation between Red and Darin and asks which version is real. Red explains that Darin is a practiced public face that helps him handle fame and criticism, while his private self is more reserved. Cindy begins to recognize the shifts in his posture and voice, and a playful reference to a film character helps her find the familiar, toothless smile of her Red beneath the celebrity image.

Chapter Twenty-One

Back in the suite, Cindy and Red begin a long conversation about the past and the elaborate reunion. Red tells her he has kept a small picture she gave him and that he often prayed for her happiness. He also explains how memories of Cindy sustained him through later relationships and grief, and how writing the new novel helped him turn his longing into a plan. Cindy asks whether the plan came from his private self or from the authorial persona. Red insists that he acted out of genuine love, while acknowledging that Darin gave him enough confidence to face rejection. Their playful exchange leads to questions about the roses, verses, squire, limousine, and public reveal, helping Cindy distinguish Red's thoughtful gestures from Darin's taste for spectacle. She ultimately tells him that Red is the one she loves, and the night ends with a return to the ordinary companionship they missed.

Chapter Twenty-Two

The next morning, Red resists taking advantage of Cindy while she sleeps, choosing instead to let her wake and decide the pace of their intimacy. They share a kiss and breakfast, then

discuss how to spend the holiday weekend. Cindy chooses the quiet woods of Red's home over a grand fireworks outing, signaling that she values his ordinary life as much as his celebrity world. On the flight back to South Carolina, Cindy reads the novel and asks about the life it depicts. Red shows her the small town, his house, and the building-supply business he is buying. She admits she is tired of the pressure and politics of her programming job and has long wanted a simpler life. Their conversation opens the possibility that she might eventually help with the business, while Red makes clear he will not demand that she give up her own career.

Chapter Twenty-Three

At Red's home, Cindy settles into the quiet setting and joins him for a walk through the woods. The familiar path restores memories without the pain that once accompanied them, and she realizes that the loneliness she carried has eased now that Red is beside her. They discuss faith, their private vows, and Red's belief that those promises still matter; Cindy responds with hope that their reunion can fulfill the life they once imagined. They encounter the deer Red has been feeding, including a curious fawn that approaches him, symbolizing the renewed life and trust both characters are beginning to experience. The walk deepens into consensual intimacy, with Cindy clearly expressing her desire and Red waiting for her to guide him. Their reunion is no longer a fantasy or a public performance: it becomes a mutual choice grounded in tenderness, trust, and the hope of a shared future.

Epilogue

Two and a half years later, Red and Cindy are celebrating their second anniversary and expecting another child. They have a daughter, Jennifer Marie, and Cindy has the loving, attentive partner she once wished for. Their life is not free of work or complications, but it has the quiet, domestic companionship both had been missing. Red remains a successful novelist, and the screen adaptation of Can Come True becomes an award-winning film. The building-supply business prospers while retaining the practices of the former owner, and Cindy is accepted into the small-town community. The ending restates the book's central promise: dreams can become real when people dare to pursue them and remain open to love.

Notable Quotes

> *""“Some parts are fiction. While some parts are true. Which parts are which? I leave unto you.”""*

> *""“The past is the past, don't look back. Always go forward, learning from the past.”""*

> *""“It wasn't your fault, don't blame yourself. There was nothing you could have done.”""*

""“I forgive you, Cindy. There was fault on both sides. I know that. Let’s forget all that and look to the future.”""

""“Kindness begets kindness, Loni.”""

""“I make love with you, not to you.”""

""“So, no matter how daunting it may seem, don’t ever doubt that whatever your goal, fantasy, dream, hope, desire, prayer, wish… it …can come true.”""

Full Summary

At an aeronautical design center, Cindy, an accomplished programmer under pressure to finish an enormous project, rests her head beside her computer. Her work is difficult but familiar; what exhausts her is being expected to make up for years of management’s neglect in just days. To escape the frustration, she recalls walks in the woods with a young man whose face and name she has deliberately locked away. The memory of his gentle hand still comforts her, but she has buried the pain attached to him beneath an emotional wall. Courses and volunteer work have not filled the emptiness she carries. Longing for a quieter life and a tender companion, she asks her computer screen where her knight in shining armor is.

Elsewhere, Robert Edward Dailacowski, known as Red, has spent three days writing in a cramped corner of his mobile home. Under his successful pen name, Darin TaDream, he has produced another novel, but his concentration has left him exhausted, dehydrated, and unaware of the time. A phone message from his late wife, Jenny, brings back the ache of losing her and their children in a plane crash two and a half years earlier. His agent, Mary Cooper, calls repeatedly, worried that he has disappeared. Red assures her he has finished another book, but admits that the story has stirred a twenty-one-year-old wish: to find Cindy, his high-school sweetheart, and see whether their lost love could begin again. He has avoided sleeping more than six hours because longer sleep brings recurring crash nightmares, in which he believes he caused his family’s deaths.

After a nightmare jolts him awake, Red showers, collects his mail, and drives into his small South Carolina town. Though the world knows Darin TaDream, the town knows him simply as Red, a widower and neighbor. Its close-knit residents shared his grief after the tragedy, and their everyday greetings still steady him. His friend Donna, who helped him through the aftermath and feels more like a sister, has come to check on him. She cooks breakfast, teases him about his weight, and listens as he explains his plan. Red has never stopped loving Cindy, he says; returning to her memory helped him through difficult relationships and the emptiness after Jenny’s death. Donna warns that he may be too wrapped up in his fantasy and must prepare for rejection. Still, she understands the desire to revisit a first love and encourages him to try, while bracing himself for the worst.

Red calls his brother Ken for the name of a private investigator, then, as he lies down, memories carry him back to his first day at Catonsville High. He and his friend Rob sit in the cafeteria hoping to meet girls. Rob introduces Sally, who is with Cindy Holtz. Red first notices Cindy's figure, then becomes captivated by her vivid blue eyes and shy smile. She asks him to remove his mirrored sunglasses so she can see his eyes. When he does, their gaze holds, and he feels an unspoken connection. They walk together after school instead of taking their buses. Resting beneath the trees, they share a gentle first kiss that makes Red feel he has discovered a depth of love he never knew before. He walks Cindy home, gets her phone number, and runs back to his own place so she can time him. Their easy teasing and the promise to meet again make him fall asleep happy.

The following morning, Red prepares for a four-day promotional trip, dreading the attention and luxury of Darin's public life, though Mary has arranged everything. On the jet, he calls Cott's Investigative Services and hires Patrick Cott to find Cindy. He provides her former name, birthday, school, and what he knows of her later life, asking for her address, phone number, and marital status. He offers a substantial bonus if Patrick can meet him near Baltimore before the trip ends. Red hides his excitement behind the polished, sociable persona he uses with strangers. The signing tour takes him from New Mexico to Nevada and Iowa, where public success and crowded appearances contrast with his preference for the quiet life back home. Patrick eventually reports that Cindy eats lunch at the plant where she works. Red also asks him to recommend an event coordinator, then privately celebrates the prospect of seeing her again.

Mary is apprehensive when Red confirms he intends to live out the story he has written. She fears he is reopening an old wound, but agrees to support him after he says he needs to know whether a future with Cindy is possible. Patrick meets Red in Baltimore with information and photographs. Cindy has moved back to Cherry Street, and the investigator has learned enough to arrange a lunchtime reunion. Red hires event planner Anna Sheldon and gives her detailed instructions, verses, and money to prepare a romantic series of gestures. He also makes sure to arrange a cast party for July second, when his latest film is expected to be finished. His plans draw on his public success, but he insists that Cindy must have time to choose whether to reconnect.

Red's first message arrives at Cindy's house as a budding yellow rose delivered by a costumed squire in a white limousine. The unsigned verse speaks of a love she once rejected. Cindy is puzzled, wondering which former boyfriend could be behind it, but the delivery feels charming. Red watches from a rented car, hoping she will recognize the flower's meaning. He remembers giving her miniature Texas yellow roses for their junior prom. When no call comes, he tells himself to wait.

The next week, a second rose arrives with another verse, and Cindy shares the mystery with her friend Joanna. They debate the sender's contradictions: the roses and poetry suggest romance, but the message remains anonymous. Cindy enjoys the puzzle despite her uncertainty, while her coworkers soon become curious too. Red's mother, after seeing him on television with Anna, calls to ask why he never told her he was Darin TaDream. The news report has mentioned his story about recovering a high-school love, raising the risk that Cindy might recognize him before he is ready. Mary quickly manages the publicity, presenting Red's association with Anna as part of the book's promotion.

By the time a third delivery is due, Red has spent long days helping at the building-supply store, which he hopes to buy in the fall. Cindy receives three more buds, each a little closer to blooming. The verse recalls her asking to see the sender's eyes. She begins a list of possible men from her past, considering what each had said, given, and done. One possibility, Armando, has expressive brown eyes and had been a romantic, but his life and their circumstances make him unlikely. The clues leave her unsettled, and an old memory of another man presses close without fully emerging.

Cindy's flowers and verses prompt Red to recall their time at the lake, when she played with his long hair in the sun. He remembers how deeply he respected her, and how painful it was to learn that after their separation she had shared a special intimacy with someone else. He turns from the memory and tries to recover a dream using a relaxation technique taught during his trauma counseling. As the dream begins to take shape, he hopes it may finally help him face what happened in the crash.

The dream resolves into an extraordinary flight. Red feels himself soaring freely above the earth, confident and at home in the sky, until pain weakens one arm and he begins to descend. The familiar white strip below becomes a highway crowded with moving vehicles. He tries to land safely, but his feet strike the road, and he trips over a dark vehicle before skidding into the grass. Then he sees a blue vehicle containing five people. He recognizes them as the family he is responsible for protecting, and desperately fights to stop, but collides with them. As the flames consume him, Red understands that he has been the airplane in the crash. He sees the faces of Jenny and the four children and believes he killed them. Yet as their spirits rise, the children tell him they love him, and Jenny assures him the crash was not his fault: nothing he could have done would have saved them. She urges him not to follow her, but to go on living, because love is still waiting for him.

Red wakes sobbing and calling for Jenny, with Donna beside him, summoned by an instinct she cannot explain. This time, the grief is joined by relief, warmth, and a sense of release rather than the familiar terror and anger. Donna insists he skip work, recognizing how shaken he is, and takes him into the woods. She helps him attend to the small, renewing details around him: spring flowers, birdsong, animal tracks, and finally a young fawn grazing in a

clearing. Red and Donna watch the fawn reunite with its mother and a buck. The sight of new life restores him. He decides to put out feed and salt for the deer, and Donna stays with him as he takes in the beauty of the woods. The dream has not erased his loss, but Jenny's reassurance has begun to loosen the guilt that has bound him to it.

Cindy's anonymous courtship continues, and the roses arrive in growing numbers, their buds opening week by week. At a baby shower, her friends notice the flowers and tease her about the mystery admirer. Later, when the verse mentions vows, Cindy recalls a private ceremony she and Red performed before a Christmas tree after his grandmother's death disrupted their plans for the holiday. With only God as their witness, they read marriage vows to each other and promised to love one another for life. Red treasures that memory, though he has long feared that their separation and his later marriages mean he betrayed those vows. Cindy, meanwhile, recognizes that the clues are reopening memories she has deliberately sealed away. She posts the verses at work to curb her colleagues' questions, while they turn the mystery into a weekly guessing pool.

The clues gradually reveal more of their shared history: the first tender kiss, the yellow roses, and the diamond-chip ring. Cindy is frightened that the sender might be stalking her, so she tells the squire. He reassures her that the man lives in South Carolina and came to town only briefly to arrange the deliveries. When the squire conveys her fear, the sender replies in verse that he is far away and waits to hear her voice again. The ability to send messages back and forth eases Cindy's worry and makes the courtship feel more personal. Still, she cannot identify him. Even the initials D.T.D. leave her puzzled. One verse evokes the late David, whose comforting memory briefly returns to her, but her friend Joanna helps her understand that grief can make an old presence feel vivid without meaning the sender is actually dead.

Red, meanwhile, begins to see how his public persona can help him and also obscure him. On a flight, he gently turns down the flight attendant Loni's romantic interest, telling her that Cindy knew the quieter man beneath the celebrity image. He wants Loni to help make Cindy feel welcome if the reunion succeeds. His agent, Mary, also thinks beyond the romance itself: the press could overwhelm Cindy, so Mary arranges security for her arrival at the film studio's cast party. At Donna's urging, Red even goes dancing, where his polished Darin persona helps him mingle, but his fame attracts a crowd and turns an ordinary night out into a public appearance. Donna points out that he need not be either completely guarded Red or relentlessly sociable Darin; he may find a comfortable blend.

As the twelfth delivery approaches, Cindy worries over what she will do when the roses stop. She accepts an invitation to dinner with Joanna and Pat Cott, the private investigator Red hired to find her. Pat cannot reveal his client's name, but he confirms the man is not the ordinary person Cindy remembers and has become well known. His guarded manner and her mounting anticipation leave her more anxious than ever. Red, too, is restless, afraid she may

have forgotten him or might reject him. In the meantime, he finally tells Loni the reason for their breakup: as a teenager, he had worked constantly, hoping to save money for a house Cindy wanted. His jobs and evening classes left them little time together. When Cindy ended the relationship, Red told her he had been working for their future and left, deeply hurt. He never understood that she felt neglected, and she never knew what he was sacrificing to build a life with her.

At Cindy's workplace, Red waits in a suit of shining armor while the last roses, the scroll, and the crowd gather around her. The scroll recounts their first meeting, their school days, the kiss they shared, the prom corsage of miniature yellow roses, the ring with its tiny diamond, and the private vows. It offers her three clear responses: no, and he will disappear; maybe, and he will give her time; or yes, and she can summon him. As the memories unlock, Cindy recognizes Red and answers yes, calling him by his old nickname and asking to see him immediately. The knight approaches, lets her guide his hands to his helmet, then kneels and reveals himself. They embrace, and Cindy apologizes for ending their relationship without explaining what she felt. Red forgives her, acknowledging that both of them made choices that hurt the other, and asks them to turn toward the future.

Before he can tell her everything, a woman in the crowd recognizes him as Darin TaDream. Red panics that the revelation will spoil the moment, but Cindy stays close. He tells her the truth: Darin is his public identity, the confident, practiced face he uses in the world of celebrity, while Red is the man she knew and loved. He arranges a formal dinner that evening so she can see that world for herself, while promising time alone afterward. He also handles the startled fan who exposed him, asking her to keep the connection between the novel and Cindy secret until he can explain it properly. Then he entrusts Cindy to Anna, who offers her a ride and a recorded message from Red. In the limousine, Cindy watches him explain that their reunion went as he hoped, and, reassured that she can still choose whether to continue, agrees to go shopping for the evening.

At the beauty resort, Cindy's pampering becomes more than a procession of luxury treatments. Her attendant, Janice, is subdued and uncertain, so Cindy's kindness and willingness to try the apricot-and-mango juice gradually bring her out of herself. When another guest collapses in the steam room, Cindy helps Janice respond, then reassures her that she feels safe in her care. The day's extravagance contrasts with these ordinary exchanges: Cindy is treated to a custom gown, professional styling, and attention from famous specialists, yet what matters most is the warmth she offers and receives. As the staff talk about Darin's novels, Cindy hears how much the public persona has impressed them, while she privately holds onto the man she calls Red.

At the Pronghorn complex, Red anxiously waits for news from Anna. She assures him that Cindy loves the gown he had made for her and still seems deeply attached to Red. Cindy,

meanwhile, asks the limousine to stop at her house so she can retrieve the little diamond-chip ring Red gave her long ago. Putting it on feels like an answer of her own: she remembers the day she ended their relationship, his hurt, and the house he had hoped they might share. Anna gently reminds her that Red has forgiven her and that she must allow herself to accept his love again.

At the airfield, Cindy learns that dinner is in Hoboken, not nearby, and that Red is waiting there. She boards the company jet and watches his recorded apology for springing the trip on her. During the flight, Loni explains that the polished Darin she knows from public appearances can seem to lose something that is present when Red relaxes. Cindy recognizes the distinction but also sees that the two identities belong to the same man. She tells Loni how she fell in love with Red's eyes on the day they met, and Loni's own feelings for him settle into affectionate friendship.

Cindy arrives at the Pronghorn suite to find an earthy, comfortable space that feels much more like Red than the glamorous world surrounding Darin. After changing into the custom gown and borrowing jewelry for the evening, she is escorted through a crowded hallway of reporters to the cast-party dinner. Red introduces her publicly as the inspiration for his newest book and the woman who has agreed to give him another chance. Though the attention and press overwhelm her, his pride in her steadies her. He notices the old ring on her hand and kisses it, understanding its meaning without needing her to explain.

The dinner combines movie-world spectacle with Red's attentiveness. He orders every entrée so Cindy can taste them all, and, once the film is shown, introduces her to the people around him with personal details that make each feel remembered. Yet Cindy begins noticing when the confident, polished Darin takes over and when the quieter Red emerges. Mary protects them from the press but recommends giving one young reporter an exclusive, so the story can be presented honestly rather than left to gossip. Red tells Sue Ann Holmes that Cindy is his first love and that she has given him another chance, asking her to build interest in the book without revealing its contents. As they leave, Cindy watches him shed the public manner in the limousine. She wants to understand how much of Darin is performance and how much is the man she has loved.

Back in the suite, Red explains that Darin is a practiced public identity, useful for business and celebrity, but not a separate person or a substitute for his real feelings. He asks Cindy to give them time to know each other again before making any judgment. She agrees to ask questions, and their conversation becomes a playful reckoning with the evening. Red explains the yellow roses, verses, squire, and limousine as choices meant to remind her of their history and make the mystery romantic; he also admits that Darin's taste for spectacle sometimes made the reunion more elaborate than Red would have chosen. Cindy can see the difference between the man who wanted to reassure and care for her and the image that wanted a grand

entrance. Her final question makes clear that it is Red, not the spectacle, whom she loves.

They tease and laugh, then Cindy reads aloud from the book while Red curls beside her. He falls asleep before she finishes the first chapter. Watching him, she recognizes the simple companionship she has missed: not celebrity or luxury, but the comfort of being together. She also understands that the years apart were not inevitable. If she had told him she felt neglected, they might have talked and worked through it instead of her ending their relationship without hearing his plans. She resolves not to lose him again.

In the morning, Red wakes beside Cindy and discovers how close they have become during the night. Though he longs for intimacy, he refuses to take advantage of her sleep or assume that their reunion gives him permission. He waits for her to choose. When she wakes, she kisses him willingly, and their affection grows through the morning. Rather than spend the Fourth of July at a famous fireworks display, Cindy asks to see his home and walk in the woods. Red is moved when she calls it “our woods.” On the flight, she reads his book and learns more about his work, his plans for the building supply store, and the small-town life she has long wanted.

Red brings her to his South Carolina home, where the heat has built up because he shut off the utilities before leaving. They change vehicles, buy practical clothes and sturdy shoes, and take in the quiet town: its handful of businesses, familiar neighbors, and welcoming post office. Sandy, the postal clerk, greets Cindy and tells her that the townspeople will still think of Red as Red, whatever fame he has earned. Cindy admits that she is tired of the pressure of her engineering work and wants a simpler life. Red does not demand that she give up her career, but welcomes the possibility of building a shared life there.

On their walk through the pines, the old landscape restores the closeness they once found in nature. Red confesses that he has wondered whether the vows they made privately before God still bind them, and whether their years of separation and sorrows have been a kind of punishment for breaking them. Cindy does not dismiss the thought; she admits her faith has weakened, but hopes that, if he is right, the man who can fulfill her deepest wish is Red. The moment grows tender as they encounter the deer Red has been feeding. A fawn approaches him without fear, and he and Cindy cross the clearing quietly among the animals, sharing the wonder of new life.

When they kiss, desire rises, but Red still lets Cindy set the pace. She makes clear that she wants him, and when he asks her to guide him, she does. Their lovemaking becomes an act of mutual trust rather than an assumption or a grand romantic performance. Afterward, they laugh together and make their way home through the woods, carrying their clothes and enjoying the freedom of being alone together.

Two and a half years later, Red and Cindy are celebrating their second anniversary. Their daughter Jennifer Marie is nearly a year old, and Cindy is six weeks pregnant with their second child. Red continues to write successful novels and remains a celebrity as Darin, while Cindy has learned to move comfortably among his colleagues. Their building supply business has grown without losing the service and values Red inherited from its former owner, and the town has welcomed Cindy as one of its own. Their life is quieter than the world of premieres and limousines, rooted in home, work, nature, and companionship—and the love they thought they had lost has become the life they share.

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