

DEAD LOVE.....RESURRECTION!

PreView
(2020)

**Dead Love
Resurrection!**

PreView of The Novel

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DEAD LOVE.....RESURRECTION!

Disclaimer

While drawn from my youthful experiences growing up, recollections from my work experience in business, and my years as a fine art dealer, *Dead Love.....Resurrection!* Books I and II are works of literary fiction.

Names, characters, places and events described, referenced or portrayed in this novel are the product of my imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, places and events is coincidental.

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#

I Will Always Love You

Nothing shouted, *Welcome Home!* as Sean MacDonald ran along the once tree-lined country roads of his youth. Which to his dismay had all been urbanized with concrete curbs, city sidewalks, traffic lights and wannabe Hollywood houses surrounded by weed-less lawns sprayed Technicolor green and guarded by armies of ceramic gnomes: marching dwarves; dancing trolls; and the occasional virgin inside an up-turned bathtub stuck into the ground.

The moment Sean turned onto Western Highway, he spotted the old sandstone church and 300-year old cemetery. Sensing the same uneasy feeling the day he left Blue Fields twenty years ago, Sean glanced at the combination digital wrist watch and heart-rate monitor, which displayed a steady 145, on target for his pace and age.

A haircut shy of six foot and more stocky than trim, Sean didn't have the ideal build for a distance runner: two pounds per inch of height. Which meant he was 30 pounds too heavy to be running. But he ran anyway. His running as important to him as his writing: '*Just trying to stay a few steps ahead of the Devil*' was his stock reply, when anyone asked him why, at his age, he ran every day, rain or shine, even in winter.

Sean laughed and broke into an all-out sprint. His pulse was unchanged for the first dozen strides, then began slowly climbing, 156, 162, 168, which triggered a frantic beeping from his watch, telling him to Back-Off! Heeding his programmed warning, dictated by his cardiologist after he put three stents into Sean's right coronary artery, he slowed to a brisk walk, his gaze fixed on the cemetery a stones throw up ahead.

"Why the hell did you give in to that woman?" he muttered, repeating the question he'd been wrestling with ever since he stepped off the bus in Blue Fields. Having just completed a month-long book tour, he had his fill of stale cookies, warm punch, covens of suburban housewives dressed up as wannabe Goths, and little old ladies asking him in a secretive whisper if there was lots of 'good sex' in his book.

With *Dead Love*, Sean put an end to what his editor, Don Potter, called 'A love-hate relationship' with the character he created based on his memories of what happened in Blue Fields, especially in the church cemetery, twenty years ago.

'It's time to move on. New characters, new storylines, new plots and, hopefully, new readers', Sean told Don Potter. Even though he knew the characters he created, and what happened in the cemetery that summer after High School graduation, would haunt him, slipping in and out of his mind, an uninvited spirit with a mind of her own.

Sean's change of heart about never returning to his hometown was prompted by a call from a woman who said she was a Trustee of the Blue Fields library. After he declined her request for the third time, and after a long silence, she asked in a soft, almost girlish voice, "Please, Sean, for me?"

In that fleeting instant, Sean was certain he heard Judith's voice and found himself unable to refuse Elaine Ander's request.

Sean walked across the lawn beside the church to the abandoned cemetery, imprisoned inside a chest-high rusted wrought iron fence crawling with ivy.

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Hesitating, his hand inches from the gate latch, Sean found himself questioning whether or not he wanted to risk unearthing the memories he left behind a lifetime ago.

Fictional characters were easy for Sean, he could give them life with a few dozen keystrokes and take it away just as quickly; but Judith was a different story, one whose end had never been written.

Sean told himself, "She's dead, MacDonald. Dead is dead," as he pushed open the gate and shuddered at the unnerving sound of rusted iron grating against rusted iron, scrapping away the cathedral quiet of the warm Indian summer afternoon. Remembering a trick long ago forgotten, Sean lifted the gate and slowly, gently, closed and latched it. He then turned and stopped, unable to proceed.

The once familiar trees were now two decades older and easily twenty feet taller, their branches decorated with autumn leaves, casting unfamiliar shadows everywhere. And the once memorized headstones had been devoured by hungry weeds or knocked-over by adolescent vandals trying to overcome their fear of death.

Spotting a familiar shape, another, then one more, Sean began to slowly retrace his way through the maze of half-buried markers, pock-marked headstones, miniature marble mausoleums and concrete angels frozen in flight. As he lazily kicked his feet through the dusting of crisp autumn leaves, he uncovered a small American flag and picked it up. The fabric was threadbare, colors faded, the skinny wicker stick splintered. He gently fit the flag back into its corroded bronze plaque atop the old headstone.

Sean then closed his eyes and put his memory to the test; but no matter how hard he tried, he could not remember who the flag honored. In spite of the fact that there was a time when he could name everyone sleeping here. Sean also knew all of the birth and death dates. And he could reel off names of husbands, wives and the many children who died too soon.

Sean whispered, "You were one strange kid, MacDonald," paraphrasing what many of his friends said after seeing him in the cemetery taking a rubbing off the face of another headstone. Destined to hang in his bedroom until he had memorized the inscription. Then wrapped in a plastic bag and hidden in the barn, in the rafters above the hayloft, with all of the others.

Still refusing to open his eyes, Sean placed his fingers on the face of the next next headstone and began to trace the weathered letters and numbers, while reading aloud what he felt, "Jonas Blauvelt, seventeen forty-seven to seventeen seventy-eight. Son, brother, father and loving husband. He gave his life to bring us to this new world."

Whatever apprehension Sean had felt about returning to Blue Fields slowly faded as he moved from headstone to headstone, blindly reacquainting himself with one forgotten old friend after another. But his relaxed feeling abruptly changed, when he had worked his way to the back of the cemetery and into the clearing where he secretly set a modest stone marker into the ground with his bare hands, marking a grave never dug for a body never found.

As he stepped into the clearing, Sean spotted a corner of the marker peeking out from beneath the blanket of leaves. He waited for the memories to return. Nothing. He shut his eyes, waiting, but not a single image out of the past answered his silent call.

"This is crazy," he told himself and knelt down, intent upon clearing away the leaves and confronting his deliberately forgotten fears. Only to be startled by the sound

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of the rusted cast iron gate creaking open. Jumping up, Sean spun around and quickly laughed at himself, when he saw Pamela, who waved and called out, "I thought I would find you in here," and started weaving her way through the cemetery toward Sean.

As tall as Sean, Pamela Eagleston's smoldering red hair was cut boyishly short and the only make-up to be found on her smooth angular face was a light brush of iridescent-red over her lips. As Pamela drew closer, a stiff breeze rose up, trapping her inside a swirl of dead leaves. She stopped and shut her eyes, waiting for the wind to blow itself away. But it grew stronger, pulling at her hair and clothes, as if it were alive.

In that instant fragments of Sean's never-ending nightmare he thought he had securely imprisoned deep in his subconscious were set free: a shadow moving about with feline grace, mirroring his every move; the midnight air turning damp, cool, then painfully cold; muffled whispers followed by a deafening scream never to be forgotten.

Shivering, Pamela zippered up her leather jacket, lowered her head, and made a bee-line for Sean. Grabbing his hand, she snuggled up against him, gave him a quick hug and affectionate peck on the cheek, then asked with a playful nudge of her hip, "Okay, Romeo, where is 'Fair Juliet' sleeping?"

About to kneel and brush away the leaves to show Pamela the headstone, Sean was distracted by a voice in the back of his mind shouting, *Run!* followed by another voice, distant, faint, a woman, pleading, "*No! Please stay. For me, Sean.*"

Before Sean could answer, the wind whipped the leaves on the ground into a frenzy, exposing the small stone marker lying at their feet.

Sean dropped to his knees and began rubbing the face of the headstone, as if he were trying to erase the words that had been scratched or chiseled into the polished block of granite, changing his youthful vow of eternal love to read.....

AND I Will Always Love You **SEAN**

#

She walked out into the lake and disappeared beneath the blanket of fog.

Standing in front of the seven-foot high galvanized chain-link steel fence surrounding the Town Reservoir, Sean took the rolled-up towels Pamela was holding and stuffed them under his shirt. He then locked his hands together and gestured to Pamela. "C'mon, let me help you up and over the fence."

Smiling, Pamela playfully patted Sean on the top of his head, scaled the fence with the strength and stealth of a large cat, and jumped down on the other side, landing with equal feline grace. Propping her hands on her hips, grinning, she quipped, "Your turn."

"Where the hell did you...?"

"Don't ask." Pamela laughed. "You don't want to know."

Shaking his head, Sean pulled the towels out from under his shirt, tossed them over the fence to Pamela, then started climbing the fence. But awkwardly, struggling, while trying his best not to laugh at himself when he saw Pamela stifling a laugh.

As he straddled the top of the fence, snagging his pants on the twisted points of wire, Pamela reached up to help him down. Waving her off, Sean freed himself and half-jumped half-fell to the ground and stumbled into Pamela's waiting arms.

Giving Sean a playful kiss, Pamela handed him his towel and started down the long gently sloping hillside crisscrossed with parallel rows of knee-high evergreens and dotted with clusters of uninvited weeds.

Sean fell into step beside Pamela as they slowed to a lazy walk in the loose sandy soil. Pamela nudged Sean with her hip, then gestured with a sweeping wave of her hand and asked, "So where is this secret swimming hole you've been carrying on about ever since that woman talked you into coming home for a book signing?"

Sean gestured off in the distance to a small fieldstone bridge spanning the stream feeding the reservoir, then sketched an imagery wavy line over the water.

"When I was growing up, the Hackensack creek slipped under that decades old fieldstone bridge on the right, and into that large pond we called the Forty Foot. Which was strictly for fishing, since we were all afraid to swim in the Forty Foot because of the scary whirlpools. The creek then snaked its way through the woods that no longer exist to the Seven Foot." Sean poked the air with his finger. "Which was just about at the foot of this hill we're standing on. The Seven Foot was for the younger kids."

Sean relocated the imaginary Seven Foot with another poke of his finger and continued drawing while talking. "Further down the creek, hidden in the woods, was the Ten Foot, which was the private domain of the older guys and their girlfriends." Sean added with a throaty growl, "Rumor has it that no bathing suits were allowed there."

Darting up ahead, Pamela spun around and spread her arms, blocking his path. "Did gallant Romeo take fair Juliet there too?"

Sean was surprised by Pamela's question. In their two years together, she had not once shown even a flicker of interest in the women, or girls, in his life before he

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met her and stopped seeing anyone else. Passing it off as an attempt to get a rise out of him, Sean replied in a throaty growl, "Don't ask ... you really don't want to know."

Laughing, Sean broke through Pamela's blockade and started running toward the far end of the reservoir, where a heavy cloud of mist was clinging to the surface of the water. Before he'd gotten too far, Pamela was behind him and gaining on him.

#

Sean had never known a woman as competitive as Pamela. Or as physical. At first, when they were still telling harmless white lies and holding back the truth, Sean met the challenges he thought Pamela posed. After the hunger had been satisfied and trust earned on both sides, the lies were slowly, steadily, replaced with bits and pieces of the truth. That's when Sean had come to realize he was the spark and not Pamela, egging her on just like now. He also discovered that for some reason he needed to prove to himself that she would give chase, which is when the real doubt had set in: his fear that one day he would run, not knowing why, and Pamela would not give chase.

Though it also might be the ten-year spread in their ages, Sean being older and, he realized, less experienced than Pamela and as a result less secure? *Then again, he wondered, The twenty-million dollar difference in our bank accounts might be a factor?*

#

Throwing up his arms in mock surrender, Sean laughed, "I'm too old for this!" and slowed to a lazy walk, only to have Pamela run into him. The impact sent them both tripping and tumbling onto the ground. Lying sprawled on their backs, a tangle of arms and legs and towels and moonlit shadows --- each of them trying to catch their breath --- Pamela asked cautiously, almost apprehensively, "I realize it was a long time ago, but do you think there's a chance that you still love her and don't know it?"

Surprised by her question, Sean chose his words carefully. "How can we possibly love someone ... truly 'love' them in a mature way ... if they are diseased? Dead."

Pamela replied in a solemn and knowing womanly tone of voice, "Unlike sex, love is not something we can turn on and off like a faucet. It's either there or it's not. And at eighteen, you two were no longer 'children'." Rolling over onto her stomach, Pamela propped herself up on her elbows and leaned into Sean. "So, my romantic young man, who puts headstones over empty graves and professes eternal love for a young woman he only knew for a short time? Or do you still love her and don't realize it?"

Sean knew that if he didn't answer, and quickly, his silence might indict him.

"I have the memory of having loved her, or whatever it is we feel at that age. But I do not now have any feelings of love or affection for her."

What Sean hadn't said, what he knew he was unwilling to admit, was that he was afraid the feelings might be buried somewhere deep inside him and if he wasn't careful they might slip out along with all of the unwanted memories. And the pain.

"Am I making sense?" he asked, hoping he had and the matter was closed.

Pamela gave Sean an unquestionably cool peck on the cheek, which was her signature way of ending a discussion that upset her, and stood up.

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Snatching up the towels, Pamela shook them out, gave Sean his towel, added a less than gentle kick of her foot, and said with a note of impatience, "C'mon. Get up. Let's go find the rest of those demons of yours and flesh them out. Along with accepting the fact that what was done to the headstone was probably nothing more than a prank by some teenagers."

Sean shook his head, rejecting Pamela's reasoning.

She quickly responded. "Okay. Then tell me who you think could possibly have known that you two were in the cemetery at night and what you were doing there?"

Without responding, Sean started around the reservoir in silence, moving steadily closer to the isolated patch of fog hovering above the surface of the water a stones throw from the shore. Pamela caught up, matched his determined pace, and was first to break the silence. "Why do I get the feeling there's something you're not telling me?"

Sean was about to disagree, to mount a knee-jerk typically guy-type of defense, when he realized Pamela was right: there was something he couldn't tell her, but not because he wouldn't, he couldn't. Everything was off in the distance, beyond his reach. Shadowy silhouettes lurking about as if they were waiting for something or someone.

But what? And why? He wondered. Growing more frustrated by the moment as he tried but couldn't remember, Sean said in a quiet voice, "I'm sorry, I should have..."

"No!" Pamela snapped. "You don't owe me any apologies. We both have demons in our past that we haven't come to terms with." Pamela paused, as if trying to find the right words. "I just don't wear mine on my sleeve like you do. Which in a strange sort of way, I envy you for being able to lock things up in little boxes of your mind."

Sean was surprised to hear Pamela admit what he'd suspected from their first meeting two years ago at The New York Academy of Fine Art. At thirty-five, Pamela was hiding from who and what she was: sole heir to a two billion dollar charitable trust, blithely teaching painting and drawing for a pittance, while banking her annual six-figure allowance. Her disguise had been complete with shoulder-length burnt orange hair, diamond studs in both ears and a small emerald stud piercing the side of her nose.

"Right here," Sean announced and stopped. Kicking off his loafers, he spread his towel out on the ground, then gestured to the patch of fog hovering over the water.

"That is the old Ten Foot."

Pamela started laughing. "How do you know that?"

"Simple. The Ten Foot always steamed like this in late spring and early fall. And sometimes on cool summer nights."

Slipping off his sweater, Sean tossed it onto the towel. His shirt was next. He stepped out of his pants, then his briefs, to stand naked in the moonlight.

"According to the experts, whoever they are, there's an active fault running through Rockland County, which they claim explains the fog. Something about one of the wells feeding the reservoir passing over a release point and being heated up and surfacing here." Sean laughed. "We convinced ourselves it was the devil's work."

Sean waded into the water up to his knees, then turned back to face Pamela.

"Too cold for you?" he teased. "Just going to watch ... like a girl?"

Pamela promptly peeled off her clothes. Taut and trim, yet every bit a mature woman, Pamela cut a sensuous silhouette in the dark. She laughed, "I suppose I'm just as crazy as you are," then ran into the water and dove headfirst beneath the surface,

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only to jump back up just as quickly and wrap her arms around herself. Shivering, she took one look at Sean, who was still dry, and started splashing water at him.

Laughing, Sean dove backwards toward the mist, with Pamela in pursuit. He felt her hand graze his calf, grab his ankle, and pull him to her. He broke free and surfaced. Pamela bobbed up beside him in waist-deep water, the two of them shrouded by the mist, turning the moon overhead into a fuzzy blur.

Pamela whispered, "You're right, the water's really warm right here."

Sean slipped his hand around Pamela's waist and gently pulled her to him.

"Warm enough to make love?" He drew her closer, revealing he was aroused.

Pamela snarled, "Like you did with her?"

Pushing Sean away, Pamela started for the shore. Tendrils of steamy mist rising up from her naked body created the illusion that she was on fire. Sean was at her side before she could reach the shore. He took her hand and turned her around to face him.

"What has gotten into...?"

Sean stopped, his wide-eyed gaze fixed on something in the distance behind Pamela. He whispered, "We're not alone," and drew Pamela to him as if to protect her.

Pamela snarled, "Nice try."

She then pulled herself free of Sean's grasp and turned away, only to stop dead.

A woman, naked, her waist-length frazzled liquid-black hair falling down over her shoulders and partially hiding her breasts, glided past Pamela as if she didn't exist, stopped in front of Sean and spoke in a rasping voice, "Have you missed me, Sean?"

She then reached out and brushed the tips of her fingers over his chest, her splintered nails scratching open his skin, drawing blood, and igniting a fire inside him he couldn't quench. He tried to pull away but couldn't: his actions, no longer his to control.

She ever-so-slowly eased past Sean, grazing his chest and shoulder with her bare breasts, sending an uncontrollable electric shock through his body.

She smiled and gave a subtle sideways tick of her head, as if to ask him to come with her, then walked out into the lake and disappeared in the fog.

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