

HONEYMOON

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PART ONE

One

Interior decorator, Nora Sinclair, never met an open space she couldn't make beautiful. Including her empty suitcase. As she packs it to perfection with neatly folded clothes she hears a playful voice over her shoulder telling her not to go. It's Gordon Brown, her former client. And current lover. He's sexy, cocky, and a very successful investment banker. A boyish forty to her girlish thirty-five. "You travel too much," he tells Nora with a sigh. "This from a man with a million frequent flier miles," she shoots back with a smile. Nora and Gordon continue their quick banter, funny and loving. We like them. They're good together—and not just when they're standing up. A minute later the two engage in some terrific, earth-moving sex. It makes us feel great, horny, and envious.

Two

It also makes Gordon very hungry. So afterward, Nora cooks him a juicy burger that would do Smith & Wollensky proud. As they sit together in plush robes at the kitchen table of Gordon's Westchester estate, they gaze into each other's eyes. Gordon says he's never been happier, and Nora agrees. "Then what's stopping us?" he says. "You've already got more clothes here than I do!" Nora laughs. "Is that your idea of a proposal?" Gordon reaches into the pocket of his robe and removes a small Tiffany box. He drops to one knee. "No," he says. "*This* is my idea of a proposal." The ring is huge. It sparkles bright. And so does Nora. "Yes, yes, yes!" she sings out. "I'll marry you Gordon Brown!" They hug and kiss and celebrate with a bottle of Dom Perignon. "A toast to happily ever after," says Gordon. Soon, Nora's limo arrives. She laughs and shakes her head. "The best day of my life and I've got to go see a client. Can you believe that?"

Three

Late that afternoon, Nora arrives at a spectacular brownstone in Boston's Back Bay. On the doorstep, she removes Gordon's engagement ring and puts on another one. She lets herself inside, and then calls out from the foyer, "Avon Lady calling. You awake? You better be awake, Mr. Walker!" A tall, handsome man comes out of his den carrying a thick manuscript. It's Jeffrey Walker, former client and fiancé number two. He's in his late thirties, cerebral yet charming. A wealthy, best-selling author of historical fiction. Nora drags him back into the den and makes love to him on his favorite leather couch. The reader gets horny all over again. Nora and Jeffrey make a fantastic couple—it's a great relationship from the look of things. Après sex, Nora cooks Jeffrey a big juicy burger in her bra and panties. They talk wedding dates.

Four

That night, Nora lies in bed waiting for Jeffrey to fall asleep beside her. Finally, she hears that little whistling sound he makes. He's officially out. And up gets Nora. She tip toes down the hall to his study and sits down behind his desk. Under the dim light of a lamp she turns on his computer. Like a pro, she begins typing. Numbers and letters. Quickly and quietly. Just as she seems to find what she's looking for . . . Click! The room lights up. Jeffrey stands at the doorway in his boxers. "Nora, it's 2 A.M., what are you doing?" She doesn't flinch. "I'm sorry, honey. I couldn't sleep so I thought I'd check my e-mails." He shakes his head and smiles. "You never stop working, do you? You're worse than me. Now come back to bed." Nora says she'll be right there. As Jeffrey leaves she closes the file she was looking at. "First Bank of the Bahamas," reads the heading. What's Nora up to?

Five

The next day, Nora arrives home to Manhattan and her huge penthouse loft in SoHo. Its ultra-modern design couldn't be more different than Gordon's estate in Westchester or Jeffrey's brownstone in Boston. It's filled with the things she loves and collects—without concern for the needs of anyone else. Nora opens a bottle of pinot grigio and pours herself a glass. She unpacks her suitcase, making a neat pile for the dry cleaner. So meticulous. Then she takes care of some Man Maintenance. She places calls to Gordon and Jeffrey, saying just the right things to both of them.

Six

After her second glass of wine, Nora draws a bath. She slips into the soft, bead-laced water and rests her head back. Her eyes close. It's absolute bliss. But then her eyes snap open. There's shouting coming from the living room. Nora gets up and walks quietly down the hall, peering around the corner. There, a man and a woman are engaged in a heated argument. "You can't have her!" screams the woman. "Over my dead body will you come back here after all these years and take her away!" The man begins to laugh. "Over your dead body, huh? That I could live with." The woman, more irate now, storms over to a closet and removes a painted blue box high on the shelf. She flips it open and takes out a gun, her hands trembling. Then Nora watches in horror as her mother pumps three bullets into her father's chest. In the sudden quiet of the apartment, Nora begins to cry. Her mother turns and sees her. "Go back to bed, honey," she calmly tells her little girl. "It's all just a bad dream."

Seven

The phone ringing jolts Nora awake from her bath. Teary-eyed and a little dazed, she answers "Hello?" on the nearby portable. It's her best friend, Alison, confirming dinner that night with the girls. An hour later she meets up with them at Pico in TriBeCa. They eat, they drink, they laugh, they gossip. Nora's at ease now and it's clear that she loves her independence. What's amazing is how her

friends, who think they know Nora so well, hardly know her at all. And that's just how Nora wants it. She's always strategically forthcoming about her life—revealing little in a way that sounds like she's revealing a lot.

Eight

After dinner, Nora returns to her loft. She's buzzed but still in control. Always. She gets into bed with a scrapbook and flips through some newspaper clippings. A couple of stories and an obituary for a previous lover, Dr. Richard Hollis. "Top Doc Dies in Medicine Mix-Up," declared the *Post*. Nora closes the scrapbook as her thoughts turn to the new men in her life. Gordon and Jeffrey. She compiles a quick mental list of how much she enjoys being with them both . . . equally. The laughs, the sex, the very large lifestyles. It's such a tough decision. But with a nod of the head Nora makes up her mind. She knows exactly which one she's going to kill first.

Nine

The next day, Nora goes shopping for a client at ABC Carpet & Home. She may be an interior decorator with ulterior motives, but she sure does know her trade. Nora is clearly blessed with good taste and an eye for quality.

Ten

On a Friday at dusk, a Lincoln Town Car pulls into Gordon's Belgium block driveway. The hired driver steps out to open the door for Nora but it's Gordon who gets there first. He's that anxious to see her. And by the way Nora jumps into his arms and straddles him with her legs, the feeling would appear to be mutual. As the driver shakes his head and grabs Nora's luggage from the trunk, the two lovebirds are all over each other. "You're insatiable," Gordon says. "And aren't you the lucky one," retorts Nora.

Eleven

She didn't think she'd be quite so nervous. But it's been a while since Nora's done this. Mostly to ease her own tension, she lets Gordon take her to the bedroom and they have sex. Then she cooks him an omelet. She's really having butterflies. Before he even finishes his eggs, Gordon tells her that he's feeling sick, really sick. Nora has to help him to the bathroom. She makes him drink a fizzy concoction. Within seconds, Gordon violently convulses and dies right there in the bathroom.

Twelve

Nora leaves Gordon on the bathroom floor, goes to the kitchen, and fixes herself a stiff drink. She carefully washes out the glass that held the fizzy concoction with the poison she used to murder Gordon. Then it's showtime. Nora calls 911 and delivers a panicked, jumbled, and thoroughly convincing cry for help. When an ambulance arrives she is equally as compelling in person. No doubt about it. Nora is a great little actress.

Thirteen

As Gordon is pronounced dead on the scene, police arrive to file a report. Nora gives a command performance of grief and disbelief. "He had just proposed to me!" she sobs. The police listen with sympathetic ears, take their requisite notes, and have a look around. It's clear they don't suspect a thing, especially when Nora overhears a bit of their conversation. "Shit out of luck," says one of the cops. "The chick was this close to grabbing the brass ring." The second cop nods and stifles a smirk. "Yeah, and then the brass ring drops dead."

Fourteen

The EMS guys, the police, the morgue wagon—they've all left. Nora is finally alone in Gordon's house. Calmly, she walks to his study and boots up his computer. In no time she's logged on to a private numbered account at the "International Bank of Zurich." She types in Gordon's name and his seven digit

security code. "Desired transaction?" the screen asks. Nora clicks on the second box listed: TRANSFER. With a few more codes and access numbers, millions of Gordon's untaxed and untraceable money is deposited in her own offshore account. Nora makes her second killing of the day.

Fifteen

The following afternoon, Nora is called by one of the cops who came to the house. He's heard from the County Coroner's office where an autopsy has been performed on Gordon. Congestive heart failure at age forty. What a tragedy.

Sixteen

Gordon's sister flies in from Virginia for the funeral. Other than her, he had no other surviving family. The estate is settled. Naturally, Gordon's last will and testament pre-dated Nora. Most of his assets go to the sister with the rest earmarked for charities. Poor Nora. She gets nothing. The sister, who at first feared Nora would contest, is now apologetic. She tells Nora to use the house a while. She's in no rush to sell it. "And keep the furnishings. After all, that's what brought you and Gordon together in the first place."

Seventeen

Nora stands on the front steps of Gordon's home and watches as his sister leaves for her return trip to Virginia. The woman is clueless to Nora's game. As is everyone else. "No red flags. Only a checkered one," thinks Nora, her heart racing with excitement. She's one smart girl. And now an even richer one. "You're my queen," Gordon was fond of saying. Soon, in keeping with her grand plan, she'll be living like a real one.

Eighteen

Nora turns to head back into the house but not before looking over at the hedges. She thought she heard something. *Click! Click! Click!* There it is again. She stares and sees nothing, though. Probably a bird, she decides. As

she takes the last step into the house the Nikon D1-X Digicam chirps one last time from its perch in the hedges. Yes, indeed. Nora Sinclair isn't the only one with a grand plan.

PART TWO

Nineteen

In a small insurance agency office, Craig Reynolds sits at his desk sifting through pictures of Nora from his digicam. The place looks kind of dismal, and so does he. He finally calls his boss, Susan, on his cell phone. He usually calls her a few times a day. "I need you to be a sounding board. So how do I sound?" he asks. He's speaking in a pretty thick New York accent. He tells her a very funny story, in which he uses a couple of different accents. "You'll do just fine," Susan says. "That's why we picked you for the job. You're an original and you have an excellent plan." Craig chuckles at her omission. ". . . Plus, I'm no longer on probation." "Yeah, that too," she admits. "Seriously, thanks for the vote of confidence, Suze." "Yeah, well, I'm still your biggest fan." We get that feeling.

Twenty

Nora visits her mother who is now at a psychiatric facility in upstate New York. Two nurses sitting at their station watch her arrive. The younger one, new to the ward, inquires about the mother's background. The older nurse, a long time staffer named Ms. Emily Barrows, fills her in. She explains that after the mother served her first few years in jail for killing her husband, she slowly but surely began to lose her grip on reality. Nearly thirty years later and she barely knows her own name. "That's nice that the daughter comes to visit, though," says the younger nurse. "I suppose," replies Emily Barrows.

Twenty-one

“Hello, mother,” says Nora. “It’s your daughter.” But unfortunately it could be the Tooth Fairy for all this poor woman knows. Still, Nora is very sweet with her. She brushes her hair and holds her hand. This side of Nora is so incongruous with her murderous ways and yet, given her childhood trauma, the reader begins to understand the paradox.

Twenty-two

Craig Reynolds is cleaning the lens of his Nikon digicam for the third time in twenty minutes. Revved up and impatient, he’s sitting in a BMW sedan parked on the street in front of Gordon Brown’s Westchester estate. Craig never did like stakeouts. Not back in the day when he was a rogue cop, and certainly not now in his new career. Finally, Nora arrives in a red convertible. Gordon’s Mercedes. He’s only been dead for two weeks but, hey, the car drives great. As Nora starts to unload some groceries, Craig quickly crosses the big front lawn and introduces himself. He manages the local field office for Centennial One Life Insurance. He says they spoke once on the phone, but she might not remember. She doesn’t. “What’s this about?” Nora asks him. “It’s about the 1.9 million dollar insurance policy on Mr. Brown.” Nora looks at him blankly. “You mean you don’t know about it?” asks Craig. She shakes her head. “Then you also don’t know this. You’re listed as the sole beneficiary, Ms. Sinclair.”

Twenty-three

Nora invites Craig Reynolds inside. She’s noticed that he’s very intense, and if he wasn’t such a bad dresser, and didn’t have such a heavy New York accent, he’d be kind of attractive. His car is pretty nice too. “I don’t understand,” she says. “Gordon had plenty of money and no wife or kids. He’d never bother with life insurance.” Craig explains that it was a policy provided by Gordon’s firm—a perk, and a fairly new one at that. “That probably explains why Mr. Brown put you down as the beneficiary.” Nora thinks for a moment. This certainly wasn’t part of her plan but for an added windfall of 1.9 million, she’s not about to

complain. "So when will the payout be made?" she asks. "Well, you see, that's why I'm here, Ms. Sinclair. There's a little bit of a problem."

Twenty-four

Nora doesn't like what she hears but doesn't show it. She begins to put away her groceries and Craig even helps out. He explains that while his field office services the policy (and was chosen on the basis of proximity to the client) it's the home office in Chicago that calls the shots. Says Craig, "The thing is, they've decided to investigate the claim because of Mr. Brown's relatively young age." He tells Nora that a man by the name of John O'Hara will probably be assigned to the investigation. "Supposedly, he's a hardass, but I'll see what I can do to speed things along for you." Nora is thankful. Craig Reynolds is bending over to be nice.

Twenty-five

The next morning, Nora is loading her suitcase into her newly adopted convertible. The color red suits her, she decides. As she closes the trunk she notices that guy from the insurance agency watching from his car. Rollins? No, Reynolds, she remembers. Nora walks over to him and Craig disarms her like a bomb squad expert—he's so incredibly nice. And he is cute. He says he has good news. John O'Hara, the man from the home office in Chicago, has definitely been put on the case but he said that there should be a resolution soon. Nora looks at Craig. "Is that it?" She's a little confused about why this guy came out to the house again. "I just thought you'd want to know," he says. He nods toward the convertible. "Taking a trip?" Nora tells him about having a client down in Florida and takes off.

Twenty-six

Craig returns to his car and calls in to his boss, Susan. He tells her that he's met the enemy and she's an incredible piece of work. Susan says, "If anybody can bring her down, it's you." That is definitely Craig's plan.

Twenty-seven

Nora's not more than two blocks away from having said good-bye to Craig Reynolds when she turns around. She's the suspicious type and knows that everything in this world is not always as it seems. Take her, for instance. Nora heads back hoping to catch Craig leaving. There's something not quite right about him. When she sees his car up ahead, still in front of Gordon's home, she pulls over. While waiting to follow him, she reaches for her cell phone and calls Jeffrey in Boston. Bugged down by another demanding client, she tells him. She'll have to delay her arrival up there until tomorrow. Jeffrey is disappointed. He shouldn't be. He gets to live to see another day.

Twenty-eight

This guy could really use some excitement in his life, thinks Nora. She tails Craig back to his office and then to a two-bit diner soon thereafter where he has lunch. Later, he drops some laundry off at the cleaners, returns a movie rental, and gets his oil changed on his car. That night, it's dinner in another two-bit diner and a bad foreign film at the art movie theater in Pleasantville. Craig's last stop is his condo in a nondescript complex. Nora watches him go inside and, after another minute, drives off. Satisfied.

Twenty-nine

Craig grabs a Coors Light from his fridge, sits down on his slip-covered couch, and picks up the phone. He dials. "What'd I tell you, Boss," he says to Susan the second she answers. "Nora followed me all day long." Craig stands and

goes to the window and takes a furtive peek out front. “Yeah, she’s gone now,” he says, taking another big swig from his beer. “Starting tomorrow it’s my turn!”

Thirty

The next day, Nora heads off to Boston. As usual, she travels first class. It’s a great way to meet interesting, wealthy men, and this trip would seem to be the perfect example. Sitting in the window seat next to her is a man named Blake Donaldson. Tan and wearing a collarless shirt, he tells Nora about his software company and how he took it public last year. “How exciting!” she tells him. Then she gets down to business. She talks innocently about reading an article that said a lot of savvy people were hiding money in offshore accounts. “Do people really do this?” she asks, with a convincing naïveté. “Guilty as charged,” whispers back Blake. Ten minutes later, she indoctrinates him into the Mile High Club. Blake Donaldson is officially next in line for Nora.

Thirty-one

Meanwhile . . . Craig Reynolds is following her. He’s sitting back where the wine comes in tiny bottles with twist-off tops. Coach. He’s been careful not to be spotted by Nora, donning a pretty decent disguise. This should get interesting now. What’s in Boston?

Thirty-two

Craig wonders who the man in the collarless shirt is getting a kiss on the cheek by Nora outside the arrival gate at Logan. “The guy sure looks happy, though,” he says to himself. Twenty minutes later, Craig is in his rental car following Nora in hers. A song plays on the radio: “Head Games” by Foreigner. Suddenly, in the Callahan Tunnel, he loses her. Or did she lose him? Craig slams his fist into the dashboard several times. He pulls over and calls Susan. “Fuck me, I lost her!” he says. He hangs up, gets out on the side of the road, and paces for a moment. Then . . . POW! He punches out a side window of his rental car.

Thirty-three

Nora isn't absolutely certain someone is following her, but she thinks so. Or is it just paranoia? She goes to the Back Bay apartment, where Jeffrey is working away on his latest novel. Somehow, somehow, she lures him to the bedroom. They work up quite the appetite.

Thirty-four

Nora cooks omelets, which she and Jeffrey eat out on the secluded patio behind the brownstone. They talk about how hard they both work and Jeffrey suggests a long vacation in Tuscany. "We'll rent a villa—better yet, we'll buy a villa!" he says. "After all, life is for the living." Oh, the irony. And oh, what a shade of green suddenly comes over him. Nora runs and gets Jeffrey a fizzy concoction. He drinks it and dies within a minute.

Thirty-five

Nora takes a moment to finish her glass of pinot grigio before stepping over Jeffrey to head inside and carefully wash out the glass that held the fizzy concoction and poison. Then it's showtime . . . again. Nora calls 911 and when an ambulance arrives, she's inconsolable. With this performance the EMS techies actually get tears in their eyes. Of course, Red Sox fans in Boston are rather used to crying.

Thirty-six

A couple of hours later and Nora finally has her privacy. She walks to Jeffrey's library and turns on the computer. While she waits for it to boot up, she pulls out a drawer from his partner desk. Underneath it is where he kept his codes. After a host of keystrokes, Nora hits 'TRANSFER' and sits back in the chair. In a few minutes she'll not only be able to buy a villa in Tuscany, but also a vineyard to go with it. She lets go with a devilish smile when suddenly a voice calls out from the hallway. "Is there anyone here?"

Thirty-seven

Shit! Nora anxiously gets up from the computer where Jeffrey's money remains in cyber-limbo. She goes to the door and practically runs into her unexpected visitor. It's Elaine Lippman, Jeffrey's editor. In tears, the middle-aged woman explains that she came rushing over after a reporter with a police scanner called about Jeffrey's death. "The front door was open and I—wait, I'm sorry, who are you?" Nora introduces herself, her voice cracking. "Oh, I'm so, so sorry," says Elaine. "This is just awful. I didn't mean to barge in on you at such a horrible time." Then Elaine shows her true colors. She's come with a blank disk to get the latest version of Jeffrey's manuscript. "It's what he would've wanted," she says. As Elaine makes a move toward the computer, Nora acts fast. And what acting it is. "How dare you!" she screams. "Have you no fucking shame?!" With a few more expletives, a cowering Elaine Lippman is shown the door. Nora's not about to be exposed by some crass book editor!

Thirty-eight

Jeffrey's funeral. The guy had more siblings than Gordon, but it just means that more people have no idea what Nora is up to. After the service, Jeffrey's accountant, a fidgety man, approaches Nora. He asks cryptically if his deceased client ever mentioned anything about having "foreign investments." Nora plays dumb and watches the guy squirm. He's powerless. As a supposed upstanding, law-abiding, financial advisor he too has to pretend he has no idea that Gordon was cheating the IRS.

Thirty-nine

Nora returns to Manhattan and the life she loves. She meets with a client, goes on a wild shopping spree, and touches base with Blake Donaldson—her man in the on-deck circle. He says that he'll be in the city the following week for a shareholder's meeting. They set a date to get together.

Forty

That evening, Nora meets her best friend, Alison, for drinks at the Cub Room in SoHo. They talk about men, dating, relationships, and love. As much as Nora wouldn't dare reveal her deadly secret, the way she discusses her feelings with Alison delivers some further insight into to what makes her tick. The reader, strange as it might seem, can't help but relate to Nora.

Forty-one

"Hello, mother," she says softly. "It's your daughter." Nora is back up at the psychiatric facility early the next morning where she updates her barely there mother on the happenings in her life. Fascinating is the way Nora makes cloaked references to Gordon and Jeffrey. "Doomed relationships" she says. As Nurse Barrows arrives with the noontime medication, Nora bids farewell to her mother with a sweet kiss on the forehead.

Forty-two

Nora returns to Gordon's estate in Westchester later that morning. There are two messages on the answering machine. The first is from a friend who owns an antique consignment business in Greenwich. That's where most of Gordon's furnishings will go. The second message is from Craig Reynolds who says he's got some bad news. "Please call me ASAP," he tells her.

Forty-three

Nora immediately calls Craig who says they should talk in person. It's about O'Hara. Nora offers to come by Craig's office later in the day. He points out that it's Sunday. He suggests the Tarrytown Diner. They agree to meet at one o'clock.

Forty-four

Craig Reynolds hangs up from Nora and calls his boss, Susan. "O'Hara!" Susan says when she hears his voice. Yep, Reynolds is O'Hara. "Tell me what's going

on. Is your big plan working? Have you caught the notorious Nora, or has she gone on and killed somebody else?” O’Hara talks to Susan and he has no New York accent. He’s a very slick, very calculating. He’s playing a part himself. O’Hara is an FBI agent playing the part of Craig Reynolds, a small town insurance broker. O’Hara is one hell of an actor too.

PART THREE

Forty-five

Reynolds/O’Hara takes a leisurely drive to the diner. The “insurance man” goes over his plan for Nora. He has a good idea what she’s up to but he lacks a smoking gun. As it’s been decided that a more detailed autopsy of Gordon Brown’s body is needed, O’Hara will weave it into the sting operation on Nora. He’ll use it to get closer to her and further gain her confidence. All the better when the time comes to take her down.

Forty-six

At the diner, Craig Reynolds seems embarrassed and a little nervous, almost as if he’s suddenly on Nora’s side in the insurance investigation. This goddamn O’Hara! he says. He’s apparently contacted the FBI. Supposedly, the police have agreed to exhume Gordon Brown’s body and perform tests on it. Nora can’t believe it. Craig said he’d stop it if he could. “If I was O’Hara, I’d never do something like this.”

Forty-seven

Nora and O'Hara. Two people wanting to get closer to each other in the name of one thing. Suspicion. This begets Craig agreeing to go for a ride with Nora in her convertible after the diner. Interestingly, they make a nice couple together. She really guns it on the back roads. Her skirt rides a little high on her thighs. She begins to tell Craig some background about herself, perfectly blending fact and fiction. She's kind of vulnerable suddenly, even a little sweet.

Forty-eight

Later that day, O'Hara is back on the phone with his boss, Susan. "She's the queen of half-truths," he says about Nora. "Not surprising given that our file on her is only half complete," replies Susan. The problem is that they can only trace Nora back to her college days at Brown where, fittingly, she was expelled for working as a call girl. O'Hara sighs. "Prior to that, Nora Sinclair is a ghost," he says. "If that's even her real name," adds Susan. She warns O'Hara to watch his step. She mentions a prior investigation, the one that put him on probation. As much as he doesn't want to hear it, he knows he deserves it. His transition from a follow-your-instincts cop to a follow-the-rule-book FBI agent has been anything but smooth. O'Hara can ill afford any more bumps in the road.

Forty-nine

Nora is back in Manhattan where she has dinner out with her hot new prospect, Blake Donaldson. He's handsome and he's charming. He's also something else. Full of shit. "I've got a little confession to make," he says after two bottles of merlot. "I'm not really a software mogul. I'm actually an advertising copywriter." Nora can't believe it. Not that he lied, but that he was able to fool her. She's used to being on the very top of her game. Blake begs Nora not to be upset and says he hopes she could like him for who he is—meaning, not rich. "Of course," she says with a twinkle in her eye. A minute later Nora excuses herself to go to the bathroom . . . *back at her apartment.*

Fifty

The police arrive with shovels one night at the quaint Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Westchester. There isn't anything quaint about Gordon Brown's body after several weeks being underground.

Fifty-one

Nora watches the macabre scene from a distance. This is weirding her out. She's also getting incredibly angry. While she can see Craig there with the local police, there's no one who could be O'Hara. "Who the hell does this guy think he is?!" she wonders. And just how much more trouble does he plan on causing?

Fifty-two

Two days later, Nora gets another message from Craig. He's got some gratifying news, he tells her. When she calls back he explains that the tests conducted on Gordon's body were negative. They showed no foul play. "So is Centennial One Life Insurance finally going to release my money?" she asks. He says they will as soon as O'Hara okays it. Nora begins to cry. Craig says, "Let me buy you lunch." "Will this come out of the 1.9 million?" "No, it's on me. I'm so sorry this is happening to you. I'm really sorry, Nora."

Fifty-three

The lunch is very nice, very cozy. They're both playing their head games. Afterward, apropos of nothing on this planet, Craig asks her if she wants to see his place? "Is this a test, Craig? Did you want to know if I really loved Gordon?" "Did you?" "Yes, I loved him so much it hurts." They go to Craig's place anyway. They flirt like crazy for a while. It's super-suspenseful. Then they go to bed. Nobody is any more shocked than O'Hara. Afterward, he's in his bathroom looking at himself in the mirror. "Well? Johnny? Now who are you, pal?"

Fifty-four

The seduction/cat & mouse game has really begun. But who's seducing whom? Who's the cat? Who's the mouse? O'Hara talks with his boss again. They're quite the humorous pair, actually. Susan is the best voice-over-only character in a decade. He tells her what's going on, but manages to leave out what happened with Nora at his apartment. Still, she warns him again, "Careful, O'Hara. Careful."

Fifty-five

It's all part of the job right? And he's the best. That night he takes Nora to the art movie theater in Briarcliff Manor. It's what Craig Reynolds would do, right? Then they go to her place—otherwise known as Gordon's estate—where they have their best sex yet. There's something about Nora that's irresistible. He's sure that she likes him. She couldn't be faking it, could she? Careful, O'Hara. Careful.

Fifty-six

The next morning, Nora coaxes Craig to stay home from work. They're getting kind of cute together. The two of them take the train to Manhattan. Nora gets him to try on and buy new clothes at the Polo store. He looks terrific. It's as if she's trying to spruce up Craig's image. Once a decorator, always a decorator. Then Nora takes him back to her loft. In bed, she attempts to get him to talk without the New York accent. Craig tries, but says it's too hard and that he's not much of an actor.

Fifty-seven

O'Hara returns to Westchester the following day and checks in at the Centennial One Life Insurance Agency. The place is just a front, staffed by FBI personnel. "Good morning, Molly Penny," he says, joking with his female assistant. O'Hara

then calls Susan to give her an update. All the while, he's looking at pictures of Nora from his digicam.

Fifty-eight

Nora, who has remained in Manhattan, meets up for dinner with her girlfriends. Later in the evening, when it's just her and Alison, she excitedly explains that she's met someone. Nora talks all about Craig and the rush of adrenaline he gives her. Who knew she could get that from a guy in insurance? "There's like this raw energy with him just beneath the surface," she says. "It's intoxicating!"

Fifty-nine

Nora calls Craig late that night. They have incredible phone sex. Those 970 numbers have nothing on these two.

Sixty

The next day, Nora wants the real thing. She returns to Westchester and calls Craig for an afternoon rendezvous. But he tells her that he's already got plans. "What plans?" she wants to know. He vamps. "Actually, I've got a seminar to go to. I'd blow it off but I'm one of the featured speakers."

Sixty-one

Nora doesn't know if she should believe him. She gets in her convertible and stakes out Craig's apartment. When he leaves in his car she follows, tailing him all the way to New Canaan, Connecticut. A ranch house on a ranch house street. She watches as the automatic garage door opens and Craig pulls in. Clearly, his house. "Some seminar!" she says, fuming. But she ain't seen nothing yet. Nora's mind is about to be completely blown. As she pulls closer to the mailbox she spies the nearly faded name on it. "O'Hara."

Sixty-two

Before Nora can decide what to do with this infuriating new development, the front door of the ranch house begins to open. With no cover for her easily recognized red convertible, she peels off. She drives back to Westchester and, in a fit of rage, breaks a few things in Gordon's house. She's besieged by so many unanswered questions. Why the set-up by O'Hara? Is there really an insurance policy? And what's with the sex—is that part of his plan? Nora decides it's time to get some answers.

Sixty-three

First, a little more domestic reconnaissance. The next morning, Mrs. O'Hara answers the door of the ranch house. There stands Nora. She's checking out the scene. Mrs. O'Hara is attractive enough and there are two little kids frolicking about in the living room. Nora says she's there to invite Mrs. O'Hara to join the Junior League. Mrs. O'Hara listens politely for a while then finally she says, "No offense, but fuck the Junior League." Nora walks away smiling. No offense taken. She mutters to herself, "John O'Hara—the cheating family man with the potty-mouthed wife."

Sixty-four

Next up, Nora pays a visit to the Centennial One Life Insurance agency in Westchester. It looks real enough and the "receptionist" couldn't be more helpful. Until, that is, Nora asks for a copy of Gordon's insurance policy. The receptionist stammers a bit and says she'll take a look through the file in the back. When she returns she says it must be at the home office. "Oh, that's right," says Nora. "Mr. Reynolds told me it was up in Hartford." The receptionist nods. "Then that's where it must be." Of course, as Nora well remembers, Craig had originally said the home office was in Chicago.

Sixty-five

Nurse Barrows looks up at Nora as she signs in. "Is everything all right?" the woman asks. Nora nods her head and lies. "Yes, thank you, everything's fine." It's morning and Nora, very much on edge, visits her mother. She continues her cloaked references but she cannot mask her emotions regarding O'Hara and his "betrayal." Nora is clearly besides herself.

PART FOUR

Sixty-six

Nora is back in Manhattan and back in her loft. She goes to her closet and takes a painted blue box down from her top shelf. Staring at it, she hears echoes of her father laughing at her mother that fateful night. It was so many years ago and yet it feels like yesterday. With her hands trembling, Nora slowly opens the lid of the box.

Sixty-seven

It's the next night. Nora is sitting in her convertible outside O'Hara's apartment in Westchester. She watches for a little while, then dials him on her cell phone. She invites him to her cabin on Candlewood Lake. He says no, he can't come as he's up to his neck in work. "Liar," she says. "I'm watching you." He looks out the window and sees her car parked. "Come on, Craig, you know you want to be with me. And I want to be with you."

Sixty-eight

The heat is on and the top down. Nora is flying. Music is blasting. O'Hara is wondering what he's doing in this woman's car, and why is it that part of him wants to be here? He has the weirdest thought he can imagine. He wants to

catch Nora really bad, but at the same time, he kind of wants her to get away.
So does the reader. Now where do you go with that?

Sixty-nine

The cabin is right on the lake and it's romantic, moonlit, the whole nine yards. Perfect. When they arrive, Nora is all over Craig. Then she pulls away from him. "I'm going to cook us dinner first."

Seventy

She puts on some romantic music, and she prepares omelets. She's a good, very enthusiastic cook, and she really is great with men—the best.

Seventy-one

While they eat, O'Hara asks Nora a few trick questions about the lies he knows she's told him, but that she doesn't know he knows. He plays it straight. So does she. Just about everything they say is ironic. And often funny. They're playing a really dangerous game here. Then Nora asks the most unexpected question of all. "Do you love me? Because I love you."

Seventy-two

Suddenly, out of nowhere, O'Hara is feeling deathly ill. This is the worst he's ever felt in his life. He rushes to the bathroom as Nora prepares her fizzy drink. Love hurts. And now it's about to kill.

Seventy-three

Nora tries to give him the drink but at the last moment he pushes her out of the bathroom. He shuts the door and locks it, quickly dialing 911 on his cell phone. He's scared. He's vomiting. His heart is racing beyond control. Nora bangs on the door. "You all right in there?" she asks. "You okay, O'Hara?"

Seventy-four

“That’s Agent O’Hara of the FBI,” he shouts back. The pain in his stomach is unyielding. He’s now beyond dry heaving and is coughing up blood. If he can just hold out for the police. “I know you killed Gordon Brown, Nora, and I know why. I also know about Dr. Richard Hollis in Manhattan way back when.”

O’Hara reaches down to his pant leg and removes a small pistol from his shin holster. “It’s over, Nora, I know too much . . . and I’m gonna live to tell about it.” Nora bristles. “That’s what you think, O’Hara!”

Seventy-five

The first shot just barely misses him. But the second shot finds flesh. As splinters fly from the door, blood gushes from O’Hara’s shoulder. He screams out in agony. “That’s my insurance policy!” screams Nora with a tight grip on her gun—yes, the same gun her mother used to kill her father. O’Hara hits the floor and fires three shots back at her through the door. Then . . . silence.

Seventy-six

Anxious seconds pass. O’Hara quietly, oh-so carefully, unlocks the bathroom door. He’s sweating bullets. Did the ones he fired hit their mark? Or are there more waiting for him outside the bathroom? Only one way to find out. Three-two-one, he counts down to himself before crashing through the door, ready to take down Nora once and for all. But she’s not there! Where the hell is she? She’s even scary when she isn’t there.

Seventy-seven

The suspense doesn’t let up. O’Hara looks around outside the cabin. Her car is gone. Then the police arrive. O’Hara’s cell phone rings. “You fucked with the wrong girl, O’Hara! Now I’m going to hurt you where you live . . . for real. Can you say New Canaan?”

Seventy-eight

The police rush O'Hara to his house in New Canaan. The lights are on. He barrels in to a rush of relief. Everyone's okay. The phone rings and O'Hara hits the speakerphone. She doesn't wait for a hello. "Good, I've got an audience," says Nora. "I just wanted to let you know, Mrs. O'Hara, that I've been fucking your husband!" Click! O'Hara looks at his wife. Actually, his ex-wife for about two years now. "And you wonder why we got a divorce?!" she barks at him.

Seventy-nine

O'Hara is sitting in his office—his real one—at Manhattan's Federal Plaza. He's stewing. It's been two weeks since Nora nearly killed him. His desire to catch her is matched only by his frustration in not being able to so far. All the planning and plotting, and nothing to show for it. Except, of course, a nice new 22 caliber scar on his shoulder. That, and an FBI disciplinary review board hearing the following week. *Hello*, suspension. Just then his cell phone rings. "I've missed you," she says. It's Nora! Calling from not-even-God-knows-where. "You'll be seeing me soon enough," says O'Hara. "I'll find you, Nora, trust me." She laughs. "You're so cute when you're angry." Click! O'Hara stands up from his desk and whips his cell phone against the wall. It shatters into pieces.

Eighty

The next day, O'Hara is sitting at his desk reading the directions for his new cell phone. He can't get his ringer to stop playing Beethoven and it's driving him crazy. His assistant, "Molly Penny" from the bogus Westchester office of Centennial One Life Insurance, pokes her head in. "Susan wants to see you," she tells him.

Eighty-one

O'Hara steels himself, then goes to see his boss. He's been on a strict diet of humble pie and assumes it's time for another slice. When he enters her office she's staring out the window with her back to him. Lots of tension here. She turns around. O'Hara's boss, Susan, is also his ex-wife from New Canaan.

"There's someone I want you to meet," she tells him.

Eighty-two

Sitting in an FBI conference room, Nurse Emily Barrows is a little nervous. After all, she had no business using a call box to listen in on a patient's conversation. Not that Nora's mother was doing much of the talking. Barrows explains that just before the news broke about the interior decorator who was leaving a trail of dead rich guys, Nora paid one last visit to her mother. What was said proves to be the break O'Hara and Susan are looking for.

Eighty-three

Nora is with a man named Jordan Christopher at a beautiful inn on the beach in Barbados. It's absolute paradise. As they lounge in their spectacular suite, there's a knock at the door. Room service is right on time. A silver serving table is wheeled into the suite—champagne and caviar. The waiters are O'Hara and Susan. O'Hara says, "Hello Nora." Susan snaps, "Don't you talk to her, O'Hara! Don't you say another word." Then she looks Nora dead in the eye. "You're busted, you bitch." Then she looks at Jordan Christopher. "And you . . . you're the luckiest man alive."

Eighty-four

Come sunset that same day, Susan is relaxing on a beach chair at the inn in Barbados. Nora has been taken away by the authorities. O'Hara returns with two umbrella drinks saying that the kids are fine back home. As the two of them talk and laugh it's clear that reconciliation is in the air. O'Hara turns to Susan.

“This would be a great place for a second honeymoon, don’t you think?” She reaches over and takes his hand. “We’ll see, O’Hara. We’ll see.”

The End.