



*Little Movies: tales of love and transformation is a collection of fourteen short stories by Todd Walton. Each of these stories illuminates the transformative power of friendship, emotional honesty, trust, generosity, compassion, and love.*

# **Little Movies**

## ***tales of love and transformation***

By TODD WALTON

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# LITTLE MOVIES

*tales of love and transformation*

by the author of *Inside Moves* and *Buddha In A Teacup*

**TODD WALTON**

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## Contents

|                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Author's Note .....            | vii |
| The Screw .....                | 1   |
| Mrs. Espy and the Hippy .....  | 16  |
| Zelman's Van .....             | 37  |
| Naomi Drives To Portland.....  | 54  |
| Wade Rises From the Sofa ..... | 70  |
| Beckman's Daughter .....       | 83  |
| Gig's Baby .....               | 103 |
| Maureen's Guitar .....         | 123 |
| Bernard Comes Of Age .....     | 144 |
| Tober's Stones .....           | 171 |
| Augie and Tober's Quest.....   | 187 |
| Maybe's Good Used Stuff .....  | 210 |
| The Brick Wall .....           | 229 |
| Dante and Edwin .....          | 239 |
| About the Author.....          | 245 |

## Naomi Drives To Portland

Naomi can count on one hand the number of times she's left the greater Los Angeles area since she was born in North Hollywood sixty-three years ago. When she was twenty, Naomi married Simon Welch, a real estate agent, and expected to have children soon thereafter. When she didn't get pregnant after two years of trying, she went to three doctors, each of whom declared her plenty fertile, but Simon refused to see a doctor to determine the viability of his half of the bargain.

Having planned her entire life around having kids, Naomi waited another year and then gave Simon an ultimatum. "Consult a doctor about your potency or I'm filing for divorce."

Simon steadfastly refused to see a doctor, they divorced, and Naomi went to work as the secretary for a small-time movie producer named Sheldon Reznick. While working for Sheldon, Naomi, who reminded more than a few men of Marilyn Monroe if Marilyn had been short and brunette, caught the eye of a young director named Horace Fielding and he wooed Naomi zealously.

They were married when Naomi was twenty-six and Horace was thirty-three. Naomi got pregnant on their honeymoon in Palm Springs. When Naomi was eight months pregnant, Horace directed the tiny-budget comedy *Your Name Again Was?* that eventually grossed over fifty million dollars.

Seven years later, when their son David was six and their daughter Rachel was four, Horace left Naomi for a nineteen-year-old fashion model. By then Horace had directed eleven big-budget movies and he and Naomi were extremely wealthy. In the divorce settlement, Naomi got the five-bedroom house on the beach in Malibu, the condo in Century City, sole custody of the children, and ten million dollars.

Three years later, when Naomi was thirty-seven, she married Myron Lowenstein, a venture capitalist twenty-three years her senior with whom she had her third child, Frieda. Naomi and Myron were married for twenty-two years until Myron's death three years ago when he was eighty-two.

Δ

"What's so good about Portland?" asks Naomi, talking on the phone to her eighty-seven-year-old mother Golda. "First David moved there, then Frieda, and now Rachel. Finally they're all about to have children and they want me to move there. How can I move? I've lived my whole life here. You're here. All my friends are here. I know where everything is. I offered to buy them houses near me, but they had to go to Portland. Why? David can work from anywhere on his computer. Rachel can write television shows anywhere. Frieda could have gone to law school at UCLA or USC. Why Lewis & Clark? David goes on and on about how beautiful Portland is, how fabulous the restaurants. What? Zuma Beach isn't beautiful? Los Angeles doesn't have restaurants?"

"It rains all day every day in Portland," says Golda, angrily. "People get so depressed they kill themselves. What's wrong with sunshine?"

"Exactly," says Naomi, despondently. "Frieda says it doesn't rain so much there anymore and sometimes they have snow. Since when has snow been a good thing?"

"Since never," says Golda, making a spluttering sound. "Twenty-two winters I lived in Detroit. If I never see snow again, I'll be happy. We kissed the ground when we got to Los Angeles."

"I'll kiss the ground when I get back," says Naomi, starting to cry. "But Rachel is due in three weeks. I have to be with her. I'm driving to Portland day after tomorrow. I'll be gone for the rest of September and most of October, maybe longer. I'll call you every day at the usual time. At least they're in the same time zone."

"You're driving?" says Golda, aghast. "That will take forever. Why not fly?"

"I don't fly, Mama. Remember? I flew to New York that one time with Horace? It was the worst experience of my life. How I lived to tell the tale I'll never know."

"His last movie was a bomb," says Golda, snorting. "Serves him right, the schmuck."

"Actually his last two films were huge," says Naomi, who keeps close tabs on Horace's career. "Horror movies."

"He should be ashamed."

"He makes money," says Naomi, looking around her immaculate home. "Money and young women are all he ever cared about." She clears her throat. "So I'm leaving Monday. I'll spend the night with Lisa in San Mateo and then..."

"Lisa? Lisa who?"

"Lisa Leibowitz. You remember Lisa. We went to high school together."

"I thought she lived in Glendale."

"She moved to San Mateo twenty years ago."

"Who knew?"

"I told you and told you and told you." Naomi rolls her eyes. "Anyway, from San Mateo I drive ten hours to a place in Oregon called Gold Beach. I'm taking the scenic route. The kids say I-5 is horrible and 101 is beautiful. I'm staying in a motel Rachel and David love. Right on the beach. As if I'm not already right on the beach. I'll get to Portland the next day if I don't get killed first."

"Why would you get killed?"

"I'm not planning on it," says Naomi, sighing, "but you never know."

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Naomi takes her enormous new silver Mercedes instead of her Jaguar. The trip from Malibu to San Mateo is a piece of cake and she has a nice visit with Lisa. The traffic the next morning between San Mateo and Cloverdale reminds her of driving in Los Angeles. But when she gets twenty miles north of Willits on Highway 101, she begins to feel uneasy about the absence of towns and houses. And the almost complete lack of traffic makes her wonder if something terrible has happened in the greater world, something making people afraid to go anywhere.

Now the highway abruptly shrinks from four lanes to two and huge trees crowd the road on either side—an alien place void of people. To quell her growing panic she calls her daughter Rachel in Portland, but the phone won't work.

"Why isn't the phone working?" she asks the onboard computer. "My phone doesn't work. Why not?"

"No coverage here," says the robotic voice.



"How far to coverage?" she asks, short of breath.

"Garberville," says the voice.

"How far to Garberville?" she asks, her heart pounding.

"Forty-two miles," says the voice. "At your current speed you will arrive in fifty-seven minutes."

"Why no coverage until Garberville?" asks Naomi, her voice trembling.

"No coverage until Garberville," says the voice.

Now a pullout appears on Naomi's right and she eases off the highway, and here is a young woman holding a baby in her arms, a cardboard sign propped against her backpack saying *EUREKA*.

And because Naomi is out of her mind with fear, she pulls up beside the young woman and lowers the passenger window. "Can you... can you help me?" she asks, breathlessly. "I think I might be having a heart attack."

"I can help you," says the young woman, speaking calmly.

"Thank you," says Naomi, turning off her engine and closing her eyes.

The young woman opens the passenger side door, sets her baby on the passenger seat, hurries around to the driver's side, opens the door, and places her right hand on Naomi's shoulder, her left hand on Naomi's forehead.

"You'll be fine," she says softly. "Don't worry. You'll be fine."

"Thank you," says Naomi, keeping her eyes closed. "You're very kind."

"Had a scare, huh?" says the young woman, smiling at her baby who smiles back. "What's your name?"

"Naomi," she says, relaxing a little.

"Where you from?"

"LA," says Naomi, relaxing a little more. "There were no towns or houses or other cars and I started to feel anxious and tried to call my daughter but there's no coverage here and that threw me into a panic and my heart started racing and I couldn't breathe and..." She starts to cry. "I thought I was gonna die."

"You'll be fine," says the young woman, her voice warm and tender. "We all get scared sometimes. You'll be fine."

Naomi opens her eyes and gazes into the young woman's eyes. "What's your name, dear? Where are you going?"

"Teresa," says the young woman, taking her hand away from Naomi's forehead. "That's my boy Jacob. We're on our way to Portland."

"Why are you here?" asks Naomi, her panic subsiding. "In the middle of nowhere."

"I guess so I could help you," says Teresa, making big eyes at her baby. "I wondered why they dropped us off here instead of in a town. Just out of the blue they pulled over and told me to get out."

"Who?" asks Naomi, frowning gravely. "Who would leave you here?"

"A man and a woman," says Teresa, shrugging. "Picked us up at the north end of Willits. I don't think she wanted to stop for us, but he did. She wouldn't talk to me and he wouldn't *stop* talking to me and she was not happy about that, so I think she gave him an ultimatum."

"Are you... are you homeless?"

"Kind of," says Teresa, nodding. "At least until we get to Portland. Can you hand me my boy? I think he's about to throw a fit."

"Oh don't do that, Jacob," says Naomi, talking sweetly to the little boy as she picks him up. "You are such a sweetie pie. Here's your mother. Don't worry."

She hands Jacob to Teresa and gazes at the two of them, and they seem incredibly familiar to her, as if she's known and loved them forever.

"I know you didn't stop to give us a ride," says Teresa, nodding hopefully, "but I sure would appreciate a lift to Garberville."

"Garberville Schmarberville," says Naomi, her eyes brimming with tears. "I'm taking you to Portland."

Δ

They stop for lunch at a Mexican food truck parked on the southern outskirts of Eureka—a dozen pickups parked around the mobile cantina, most of the diners Latino laborers.

"Is it safe here?" asks Naomi, gazing out her window at the burly men sitting at picnic tables near the food truck.

"Oh, yeah," says Teresa, nodding assuredly. "The food is really good. There's a good Mexican place in Gold Beach, too, but we won't get there until dinnertime, so..."

"Maybe while you get the food I could wait in the car with Jacob," says Naomi, rummaging in her purse and coming up with a fifty-dollar bill. "How about that?"

"I think I better take him with me," says Teresa, opening her door. "He's kind of needy right now. But you can stay here."

"No, no," says Naomi, taking a deep breath. "I'll come with you."

So they get out of the car and the men at the tables and the men in line at the food truck all turn to watch

Naomi and Teresa and Jacob approach—Teresa a beautiful young woman carrying a baby, Naomi an attractive woman with perfectly-coiffed gray hair wearing a shimmering blue silk blouse, Jacob a smiling cutie-pie.

The closer Naomi gets to the men, the more terrified she becomes, and she is just about to run back to her car when a big Mexican man sitting at one of the tables says, “Es un beautiful car, Señora. Es un hybrid, sí?”

“Yes, a hybrid,” says Naomi, laughing nervously. “It’s so quiet you can hardly tell when the engine is running.”

“Es big, too,” says the man, nodding. “I don’t like those little Mercedes, you know? Necesito mas leg room.”

“Yes, leg room is good,” says Naomi, grinning at the man. “You can’t ever have too much leg room.”

The man and his companions nod in agreement and Naomi’s fear vanishes.

Teresa hands Jacob to Naomi, steps up to the window of the food truck and surprises Naomi by speaking rapid-fire Spanish to the woman in the truck.

They share a table with three Mexican men and an African American man.

The African American man looks at Jacob and asks, “How old your big boy?”

“Ten months,” says Teresa, feeding Jacob a spoonful of rice. “Almost eleven.”

“Look like your mama,” says the African American man, wrinkling his nose at Jacob. “Daddy big?”

“Tall,” says Teresa, nodding. “But skinny.”

“You never can tell how big they gonna end up,” says the African American man. “I got three kids and the one who was the littlest baby turned out the biggest. He bigger than me and I’m big.”

"I have three kids, too," says Naomi, eager to join the conversation. "Come to think of it, David was the smallest of the three and the shortest kid in his class until Fourth Grade when he shot up like a weed and ended up six-foot-two. His father was only five-seven. I don't know how David got so tall. There are no tall people on either side going way back."

"My wife," says one of the other men, "in school, you know, she learn if they get good sleep they grow more."

"I'm sure that's true," says Naomi, liking everyone at the table. "David was a great sleeper. He could sleep through anything. I think you're absolutely right. Sleep is so important. If I don't get enough sleep, you don't want be around me. Believe me."

"I believe you," says the African American man, nodding. "If I don't get enough sleep, I'm not getting up on a roof."

"Sí," says another of the men. "Remember when Juan came to work so sleepy. That's when he fell."

"Got to have sleep," says the African American man, winking at Naomi. "Sleep is how we charge up those batteries."

Δ

"What a nice bunch of guys we had lunch with," says Naomi, walking with Teresa and Jacob down an aisle in a Target store in Eureka, a saleswoman wearing a red vest leading the way. "I'm so glad you took us there."

"I lived here a couple years ago," says Teresa, nodding. "That was my favorite place to eat. I'm glad you liked it. Thanks for treating us."

"Here we are," says the red-vested woman. "These three car seats are all good for infants. You'll need a bigger one in a couple years when he's a toddler."

"Which is the best one?" asks Naomi, studying the pictures on the boxes.

"This one," says the woman, touching one of the boxes. "You don't want to skimp on your car seat."

"Never," says Naomi, shaking her head. "We'll take it. Will you please have someone install that for us?"

"Um..." says the woman, frowning. "We don't usually do that sort of thing."

"I know how these baby seats work," says Teresa, nodding confidently. "Not a problem."



Jacob fusses when Teresa straps him into the car seat for the first time, so she sits beside him on the backseat, caressing him and singing to him until he falls asleep—and a moment later Teresa is asleep, too.

And though once again Naomi is driving through a vast forest void of towns and houses, she is no longer afraid.



They arrive in Gold Beach as darkness is falling and check into the Pacific Reef Motel and Naomi gets a room for Teresa and Jacob adjacent to her room.

While Teresa takes a shower, Naomi plays with Jacob and talks on the phone with her daughter Rachel.

"Everything is going just fine," says Naomi, sitting on the floor holding Jacob's hand as he stands next to her. "I had a fabulous lunch in Eureka and I'm looking forward to supper here in Gold Beach."

"Go to the Schooner Inn," says Rachel, her voice and manner of speaking identical to Naomi's. "It's right next door and it's the only decent restaurant around there."

"I may try a little Mexican place a few blocks from here," says Naomi, laughing as Jacob falls on his butt in slow motion. "I've heard it's terrific."

"Mom, just go the Schooner Inn," says Rachel, annoyed. "It's clean and safe and the food is good. Okay?"

"I'm kind of craving Mexican food," says Naomi, helping Jacob stand up again.

The little boy squeals in delight.

"What was that?" asks Rachel, startled by Jacob's outburst. "Sounded like a baby."

"There's a baby next door," says Naomi, laughing again as Jacob performs another slow motion sit down. "Warm night. I have the windows open."

"Go to the Schooner Inn, okay? The last thing I want to do is worry about you. Okay?"

"I'm fine, honey. Don't worry."

Δ

After a delicious meal in a Mexican joint where Naomi never would have gone on her own, Teresa and Naomi and Jacob return to the motel, Teresa changes Jacob's diaper, nurses him, and he falls fast asleep in the middle of the bed.

Naomi and Teresa sit on the floor with their backs against the bed and have cups of chamomile tea.

"Guess how old I am?" says Teresa, closing her eyes.

"Twenty-two," says Naomi, exhausted and wide-awake at the same time. "Twenty-three?"

"Twenty-seven," says Teresa, as if she can hardly believe the number. "I had a whole other life until five years ago."

"Tell me," says Naomi, nodding encouragingly. "I'd love to hear."

"I was born in LA," says Teresa, remembering the little backyard of her childhood home. "My mother was from Pennsylvania, my father from Mexico. They met in a restaurant where they both worked. She was a pastry chef and he was a cook. They fell in love, got married, had my brother and me, and we were pretty happy until they got divorced when I was six. My mom got custody of us, but we saw my father on weekends. He'd take us to movies or the beach and we'd get pizza or Mexican food. He was... he was a sweet guy." She stops talking and sips her tea.

"Where is he now?" asks Naomi, having seen her own father nearly every day of her life until he died ten years ago.

"I don't know," says Teresa, wistfully. "We didn't see him much after I was eleven. He had some other kids with his second wife, but I never got to know them." She shrugs. "I lost contact with him after we moved to Phoenix when I was sixteen. That's where I finished high school and went to college at Arizona State."

"What did you study?" asks Naomi, who never went to college.

"Drama and music." Teresa makes a self-deprecating face. "I was gonna be a movie star. Silly me."

"You could be," says Naomi, knowingly. "You're beautiful and graceful and you have a marvelous voice."

"Thank you," says Teresa, blushing.

"So then what happened? After college."



"I never finished," says Teresa, shaking her head. "I got really depressed halfway through my junior year."

"How come?"

"Oh... my mother had this horrible boyfriend who was always hitting on me, but I was afraid to tell her because she really liked him and..." She winces. "You sure you want to hear this?"

"More than anything," says Naomi, her eyes full of tears.

"Why?" asks Teresa, crying, too.

"Because I care about you and because it's good to tell our stories to each other." She touches Teresa's hand. "That's what we're here for dear. To listen to each other. Don't you think?"

"Yeah," says Teresa, whispering. "Maybe so."

"No maybe about it," says Naomi, tapping Teresa's hand. "So your mother's boyfriend was hitting on you and you didn't tell her and..."

"I got into a very bad scene," she says, looking away. "Alcohol and drugs and... then I dropped out and I've been moving around ever since." She looks into Naomi's eyes. "But I've been off booze and drugs and pot since before I got pregnant with Jacob. Two years and three months now."

"That's fantastic," says Naomi, putting her arms around Teresa. "Good for you, sweetheart. Conquering addiction is not easy. I'm very proud of you. Who is Jacob's father?"

"He was a graduate student at the University of Washington," she says, relaxing in Naomi's embrace. "I thought I'd finally found a good guy to be with. He said he wanted to marry me. But when I got pregnant he told me to get an abortion, and when I wouldn't, he wouldn't see

me anymore. So... here I am." She shrugs. "That's the short version. I'll spare you the gritty details."

"Tell me this," says Naomi, letting go of Teresa. "If you had plenty of money, what would you do?"

"I'd get a room in a house near a good school for Jacob," she says, nodding assuredly, "and go back to school and get a degree in Psychology and become a counselor or a therapist."

"That sounds wonderful," says Naomi, nodding excitedly. "That sounds like something I should do."



The next morning after a walk on the beach, they have breakfast in a café attached to a bookstore.

When their food arrives, Teresa bursts into tears.

"What's wrong, dear?" asks Naomi, putting a hand on Teresa's shoulder.

"I'm so grateful to you," she says, weeping. "Last night... that was the first really good night's sleep I've had in a long time. And all this good food... my milk is coming good again and Jacob is so happy." She looks at Naomi. "You're an angel."

"You're the angel," says Naomi, putting her arms around Teresa. "I'm just a rich lady who was afraid of the world until I met you."



Inching along the freeway ten miles south of Portland, Naomi turns to Teresa and asks, "Where am I taking you?"

"Downtown," says Teresa, smiling brightly. "Anywhere downtown."

"But you have a place to stay?" asks Naomi, frowning. "Don't you?"

"There's a woman who let me sleep on her porch last year," says Teresa, nodding. "She was very nice. I'm pretty sure she'll let me stay there again."

"No," says Naomi, shaking her head. "You and Jacob need a good place to live. We'll get you a motel room with a kitchen and tomorrow we'll start looking for a house."

"A house?" says Teresa, staring at Naomi as if she's insane. "What are you talking about?"

"You need a place to live and I need a house in Portland." Naomi glares at the stuck traffic. "This is just like LA. Is this why my kids moved here? Because it reminds them of home?" She winks at Teresa. "After all these years they're finally having children and they want me to move here. And though I'm not ready to move here permanently, I will be spending lots of time here. So... I'll buy a house and you can live there and take care of the place when I'm not here. And when I am here we'll share the place. Be fun. You can go back to school and you and Jacob will have a home and I'll be his grandmother."

Teresa looks out the window at a homeless encampment next to the freeway. She sees a man crawl out of a battered tent, his face etched with lines of worry. She closes her eyes and sees a beautiful old house on a tree-lined street, the sidewalk covered with snow. Now she sees Naomi come out the front door wearing a fur hat and a long black coat, holding the hand of a little boy bundled up in a snowsuit—Jacob two years from now.

"Okay," says Teresa, opening her eyes and looking at Naomi. "I guess that's what God wants for us."

*Little Movies*

“I don’t know about God,” says Naomi, smiling through her tears, “but I know about me and I know about you and I know about Jacob, and if there were ever three people who were meant to be together, we are those people.”



## Dante and Edwin

For several years now, Edwin and Frank have been meeting every other Monday morning at Caffè Trieste in Berkeley to commiserate about their extended residency in the state of bachelorhood.

Edwin is fifty-one, born and raised in the suburbs of San Francisco. A successful recording engineer, trim, with short brown hair, quick-witted, and self-absorbed, Edwin was married for three years in his late twenties and has been bitterly single ever since.

Frank is fifty-four, a British ex-pat twenty years in Berkeley. A piano tuner and birdwatcher, heavysset, with rambunctious gray hair, jovial, and full of fun, Frank is often thought to be gay, which he is not. Never married, he attributes the general disinterest in him by women to his being chubby and eccentric.



On a cold rainy day in December, Frank, late as usual, comes huffing and puffing into Caffè Trieste, hangs up his raincoat and umbrella, and sits down opposite Edwin at their customary window table.

"I have news," says Frank, rubbing his hands together. "Wonderful news."

Edwin frowns. "You met someone and she didn't immediately reject you?"

"Guess again," says Frank, taking off his glasses and giving them a thorough cleaning with a napkin.

"You inherited a million dollars," says Edwin, who frequently pretends to be annoyed by Frank when in truth he is never annoyed by Frank and wishes they could meet *every* Monday instead of every other.

"Even better," says Frank, grinning. "I got a dog. Her name is Millie. A Lab-Shepherd-Spaniel mutt. So sweet. Oh God, Edwin, I can't tell you. She makes every minute a joy."

"A puppy?" asks Edwin, unaccustomed to thinking of Frank as anything but alone.

"No, she's two," says Frank, gesturing to Mona behind the counter. "Latte, please, dear. Two shots."

"Well," says Edwin, shrugging despondently, "I suppose any sort of relationship might be better than nothing."

"I've always loved dogs," says Frank, sighing happily. "I didn't feel right about having a pooch when I lived in an apartment, but now that I've got a house with a yard..." Frank chuckles. "I must tell you, Edwin, I've been taking Millie for walks and she is so friendly... well, I'm dating a very nice woman now and..."

"Hold on," says Edwin, raising his hand to silence Frank. "You're dating someone because you got a dog?"

"I wouldn't say it's *because* of Millie, but..."

"What else could it be?" says Edwin, aghast at this shocking turn of events. "You haven't dated anyone in years."

"That's not true. There was Stella and Louise and..."

"But let's be clear about this. The woman you are currently dating..."

"Andrea," says Frank, smiling at the thought of her.

"You met through your dog," says Edwin, flabbergasted.

"In a manner of speaking, yes," says Frank, nodding graciously to Mona as she delivers his latte. "Thank you, dear."

"You look great, Frank," says Mona, taking a long look at him. "You in love?"

"As a matter of fact, I am," says Frank, beaming. "I have the most wonderful dog now."

"Oh bring her by, Frank," says Mona, touching his shoulder and winking at him as she saunters away. "I'm crazy about dogs."

"I don't believe this," says Edwin, stunned. "Mona just called you by your first name, twice, winked at you, and *touched* you. She's barely said a word to us in three years. Where did you get this dog?"

"From the pound," says Frank, nodding. "Shall I take you there to peruse the many marvelous possibilities?"

"Maybe," says Edwin, never having thought of getting a dog, though when he was a boy he had a dog he loved. *Spinner. Good old Spinner.*

"Or we can look in paper," says Frank, encouragingly. "Litters abound."

Δ

Dante, the dog Edwin adopts in January, is big and friendly with thick auburn fur and pointy ears, a three-year-old male abandoned on the freeway.

Frank convinced Edwin to give Dante a try by saying, "Should you decide not to keep him, I will take him, for I sense in him a noble spirit."

Edwin buys a cheap dog bed and puts it in the far corner of his cold garage. He also installs a dog door

connecting his garage to his little backyard overgrown with blackberry bushes, and never lets Dante in the house.

Every afternoon he takes Dante for walks on Solano Avenue where there are lots of people, and more importantly for Edwin, lots of women.



As Edwin had hoped, Dante attracts the attention of women, some with dogs, most without, conversations ensue, and even a few dates materialize, but Edwin remains unhappily single and begins to regret his adoption of Dante.



On a sunny Monday in February, the day before Valentine's Day, Frank and Edwin convene at Caffè Trieste.

"Is your offer still good?" asks Edwin, chewing anxiously on his thumbnail. "To take Dante off my hands? I hate to tell you but he's no chick magnet like yours."

Frank's dog Millie is tethered to a parking meter on the sidewalk outside the café, Mona and another woman fawning over the sweet little mutt.

"Where is Dante now?" asks Frank, saddened by Edwin's request.

"At home," says Edwin, shrugging. "In the garage or moping around in the back yard. He started out fairly cheerful, but now... I don't think he likes me. I think maybe I'll get a smaller dog. Something cute and perky. Women like that."

"I'll tell you what women like," says Frank, looking Edwin in the eye. "Women like men who are devoted to



their dogs and are loved by their dogs in return. Why? Because women want love and devotion, Edwin, just as you do. And if you won't love Dante, I will gladly give him a place in my living room and treat him like the noble soul I knew he was the minute I saw him."



Dante is curled up on his bed in the garage when he hears Edwin's car pull up in front of the house. He sighs, for it's that time of day when Edwin takes him to the busy street where there's no place to run and poop and play, and they'll walk a few blocks and then come home and he will resume his miserable life in the cold garage or under the blackberry bush in the now shit-filled backyard.

Which is why, as soon as the nights are warmer, Dante is planning to tunnel under the backyard fence and make his escape.

So imagine Dante's surprise when Edwin opens the door connecting the kitchen to the garage and says, "Come in, Dante. I got a big ham bone for you at the butcher's. And from now on you can sleep inside. I've been terribly unkind to you and I'm very sorry. I really am."



Six months later, Dante and Edwin are sitting together on a bench at the Berkeley Marina, both of them nicely winded from their two-mile run.

"Excuse me," says a lovely woman wielding a camera. "Would it be okay if I took your picture?"

"Perfectly okay," says Edwin, standing up and stepping away from Dante.

Dante barks and gazes adoringly at Edwin.

"I meant the two of you," says the lovely woman. "You have this amazing... something."

Edwin returns to his seat on the bench beside Dante and the lovely woman takes many pictures of them.

When she is done, she puts her camera away, and comes close and introduces herself. "I'm Ellen."

"This is Dante," says Edwin, giving Dante a 'Can you believe this?' look. "And I'm Edwin."

"May I take you to lunch?" asks Ellen, smiling at man and dog. "To thank you for letting me take pictures of you?"

"What do you think, Dante?" says Edwin, giving his happy dog a quizzical look. "Shall we go to lunch with Ellen?"

Dante barks and wags his tail.

"I'll take that as a Yes," says Ellen, scratching the top of Dante's head.

And Dante smiles with pleasure.





*Little Movies: tales of love and transformation is a collection of fourteen short stories by Todd Walton. Each of these stories illuminates the transformative power of friendship, emotional honesty, trust, generosity, compassion, and love.*

# **Little Movies**

## ***tales of love and transformation***

By TODD WALTON

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