

A man's life of love is interrupted when he falls asleep and won't wake up. His wife becomes a detective searching to answer this medical mystery. Only to find the answer lies within his mind, where he must fight to come back to the wife he loves.

**UNDER THE DIVI TREE:
True Love Needs No Reason**

By Michael Solomon

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UNDER THE DIVI TREE

True Love Needs No Reason

A Novel



MICHAEL SOLOMON

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“True love needs no reason.”

1

Matthew Crane, age fifty-eight, handed his first-class boarding pass to the gate agent at J.F.K. Airport. As she scanned the passenger with her wide open irises, the gate agent took particular notice of his handsome face, brown eyes, abundant salt and pepper, wavy hair.

Even though Matthew enjoyed flying, this time, he was overly anxious. Matthew never took this flight alone. He was a child again, waiting in line for his first roller coaster ride. Confusion, for Matthew, was the operative word for today. There was a heaviness in his chest; it tortured his breathing. He desperately took a deep breath, trying to sigh to relieve the pressure — it didn't work.

As the agent followed along with her eyes, he proceeded onto the Jetway, boarded the plane, and found his seat on the aisle. A female

passenger was already seated in the window seat. Her attention was focused outside the aircraft. Matthew still felt the anxiety that gripped him.

Fastening his seatbelt, he felt a slight twinge of pain. He fleetingly but silently winced — *Ouch!* It wasn't insufferable, just annoying, as his right hand moved across his abdomen and located the two-by-two-inch self-adhesive bandage beneath his shirt. It was located about three inches above his navel. It sheltered a small quarter-inch circular puncture wound on his left side, which was beginning to heal.

As the cabin filled and the remaining passengers settled in, a female flight attendant was taking meal orders. She approached the couple seated across the aisle from Matthew, with a clipboard in hand, and asked, "Would you like something for lunch? We have poached salmon or a chicken breast."

Hearing the male passenger answer in a thick French accent, "the salmon for Madame and me mademoiselle. Merci!"

Matthew turned to him and said in French, "Bien Choix Lé Saumon est délicieux." (A good choice; the salmon is delicious.)

Turning to Matthew, the Frenchman asked, “*Vous êtes Français?*” (Are you French?)

“*Non-monsieur, Je suis Américain.*” Matthew explained he is not French, but American.

He nodded at Matthew with a complimentary smile, “*Vous parlez Français très bien.*” (You speak French very well.)

“*Je parle Français seulement un peu.*” I speak just a little, Matthew explained with a smile and a short laugh.

He turned his attention to the flight attendant. Still with the heaviness, yet trying to ignore it. “I’ll also have the salmon, thank you.”

The woman seated next to him turned from the window, “It seems the salmon is on the top of the list; why not.”

With its wheels cutting through the light December snow blowing across the runway, the Boeing 757 started down its assigned path to ascend to its cruising altitude.

2

Matthew sat back and tried to relax. He felt confused. He was frightened, as though he was awakening from a horrifying nightmare. Only it was not a bad dream. This was real.

The woman to his left turned to him, extended her hand, and introduced herself. She spoke in a soft voice; it was akin to a loud whisper. “Hello, my name is Laura Baum.”

As he held her hand, he felt the chill from the cold glass of ice water she held moments before. Matthew quickly gave her a once-over glance. She is an attractive, slender woman about fifty- years old, with dark brown hair and a light complexion. She is wearing a brown knit sweater with tan cotton slacks. She is monochromatic in style.

“Hello, Laura Baum, I’m Matthew Crane,” as he released her hand.

“Is this your first trip to Aruba?” she asked, retrieving her hand.

“No, it’s my sixteenth. What about you?”

“This our first time. All my friends said it is the place to go, so here we are.”

“We?” Matthew asked curiously.

“My husband is in coach. There was only one first-class seat available for an upgrade, so we flipped a coin,” she said. “I’m just kidding; he gave it up willingly. He’s a gentleman,” she added laughingly.

Smart man, if he ever wanted to have sex again, Matthew thought.

She held a surprised expression as her eyes opened wide. “I can’t believe you have been to Aruba sixteen times.”

“Every year, this same time. I may have missed last year. I’m not sure.” Matthew is still confused.

“That is incredible. Why is Aruba so special you would go back so many times,” she asked cogently.

“Well, to tell you the truth, some people think it is an ugly island. It is located near the equator, about fifteen miles north of Venezuela and outside the hurricane belt. The trade winds are constantly blowing. They seem to cool the almost constant eighty to ninety-degree heat. But don’t be fooled. You still have to respect the burning sun. They have these trees called Divi trees which grow sideways because the wind continually blows on them. Their branches grow horizontally in one direction.

One side of the island is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean, where the landscape is barren and rocky. The ocean is rough but beautiful. The surf pounding against the rocky shore looks similar to the California coastline. The water droplets as they fall are kissed by the perpetual sunshine that reflects beautiful low-altitude rainbows. Most of the inhabitants near the ocean are wild goats who wander around. The interior of Aruba is a desert with dramatic rock formations and cacti.

The south side of the island is on the Caribbean Sea. Its lush vegetation, unusual for a Caribbean desert island, is only surpassed in beauty by miles of pristine white beaches, ranked among the most beautiful in the world. It is where the hotels are located. The waves as they strike the shore are not harsh. They approach the sand with the same force you would use to rub a baby's cheek gently. The color of the water is the brightest azure you can imagine, with visibility in some areas to a depth of over one hundred feet. It is so beautiful it can take your breath away. You're in the window seat. You will see what I mean about the color when we approach the island.

The weather is just about guaranteed. It rarely rains. People who live on the island are the friendliest you will ever meet. The only major industry on the island, other than the oil refinery, is tourism. Crime is extremely low. You could walk the streets at two in the morning without worrying about someone hitting you over the head. If you dropped your wallet on the beach, chances are it would be there the next day. The restaurants are superb. Finding a bad meal is difficult. It is known as 'One Happy Island,' which is imprinted on the license plates of all the motor vehicles on the island.

A cab driver once said to me, 'the people of Aruba sometimes feel as if they are throwing a party for all the people who come here.' The politeness and courtesy of the natives is contagious. It seems to

rub off on the tourists also, where starting a conversation on the beach is as simple as saying hello.”

“Wow!” Laura seems astonished. “It sounds so romantic. Your description is so expressive. Are you sure you don’t work for the department of tourism?”

They both chuckled. “*Ouch*” — Matthew’s hand once again found the guardian of his wound.

“I’ll promise you this. This won’t be your last trip.”

“That’s what all my friends have said. By the way, where did you learn to speak French? Have you spent time in France?”

“No. As a matter of fact, up until eight weeks ago...” as a wave of anxiety rushed up through his chest once again, he tensed. With confusion in his voice, Matthew corrected himself. “I mean eighteen months ago, I couldn’t speak a word of it.”

“That’s remarkable; how did you learn it so fast,” she asked, noticing his slip-up.

“I taught myself by listening to a language program on CDs.”

“I always wanted to learn another language.”

“I’m sorry,” Matthew said as he took another breath, still trying to relieve the pressure. “I get confused; I don’t know what I mean.” His distress intensified; his eyes were glistening.

Noticing his eyes were tearing, Laura asked, “Are you all right? You seem preoccupied and upset.”

“I don’t know. I sometimes become upset,” he answered distressingly.

“Is something wrong?” she asked, as Matthew was wiping his eyes with the napkin from his drink. Sadness overshadowing his features; it was evident to her he was troubled.

“It’s a long story I haven’t learned to accept yet.” Just the thought of it made his anxiety level intensify. He had a sudden heaviness in his throat as though something was lodged in it. Matthew sighed and said, “It is something I have to learn to live with.”

Laura turned to face him. “I’m a Clinical Psychologist and a good listener. If you want to talk, I’ll be glad to listen. Are you ill?” she

asked curiously. “I don’t mean to pry, but it sounds like something you might want to talk about.”

“No, quite the contrary, I’m very healthy. You don’t want me to bore you with the details.” *He was secretly hoping she would say yes. He hadn’t told his story to anyone since leaving the hospital rehab unit. Maybe it would help him understand it more if he talked about it.*

“Only if you want to tell it to me. It won’t go any further. Doctor-patient privilege and I won’t even charge you. I have been in practice for close to twenty years. Maybe I can help you to understand it.” Her curiosity level was intensifying.

“Well...” As he took a deep breath and swallowed hard, the pressure subsided. “It...um, started the summer before last.”

3

Eighteen months earlier.

It was the first Sunday of July. The second day of the Fourth of July weekend. They were returning from a local diner where they ate a late breakfast. Carol, his wife, was driving. As her skillful hands guided her car into their driveway, she started to quiz him once again. “Do I need my passport?”

“No,” Matthew said with a straight face.

“What about bathing suits?”

“If you want to take a bathing suit, you can.” His expressions never changed. He kept his poker face intact, unyielding, and expressionless.

Carol hated surprises. If she was not in the loop about something, she felt out of control, a runaway train without an engineer, a feeling she did not relish.

“Stop trying to figure it out. Trust me. You know I would not take you someplace you wouldn’t enjoy or want to go to. I don’t want any more questions.” He was trying to hide the coy little smirk building around his lips.

“Tomorrow morning, I am going to play golf with Jon. No cell phone, just me, my clubs and Jon. When I finish the round, I’ll pick you up, and we can have lunch together. Please trust me. You know I love you. I wouldn’t do anything to make you unhappy.”

He exited the car and walked into the house through the garage. Matthew felt a little guilty about lying to her about the passport and bathing suit. *“Well, it was only a little white lie; she’ll forgive me.”*

She lowered the top of her convertible, turned her head to look behind her as she backed out of the driveway, leaving to pick up some last-minute items she needed for the trip, still wondering where they were going. *“I’m so frustrated. I feel as if I am standing in a round room looking for a corner.”*

It was a glorious day; there wasn't a cloud in the sky. As she drove to the local shopping mall, all she kept thinking was how beautiful their lives have been. She thought to herself, "*Our dreams will finally come true.*"

As Matthew entered their house, all he could think about was how his life had become greater than his dreams. He reminisced about all he had accomplished. Was it all about to change?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Solomon is a former New York City Police Department Special Investigator. During his tenure, he was assigned to the Organized Crime Control Bureau and the Intelligence Division. He has personally met four U.S. Presidents. Michael has worked with people from the homeless to world leaders.

After his police career, he founded his own business. Within five years, he was nominated as operating the best company in America in his field by a national trade magazine. After becoming successful, he started to take care of the less fortunate. His work for various charities earned him the respect and admiration of his community.

In 2003, both houses of the New York State Legislature recognized him as “Humanitarian of the Year” in a legislative resolution. After he retired, he moved to Florida, where he began his writing and speaking career. Since that time, he has written three books, of which two became bestsellers.

Michael Solomon

His first novel, “*The Conversion Prophecy*,” was chosen as best in fiction in 2016 by Books and Authors. He was a finalist in the Next Generation Indie Book Awards, Thriller Category, and he is the recipient of the 2017 John E. Weaver “Readers’ Choice Award.”

He has appeared, as a guest, on over 350 radio and T.V. shows.

“*Under the Divi Tree*” is his fourth book and second novel; it won’t be his last.

Both his novels have been written for the Hollywood screen.

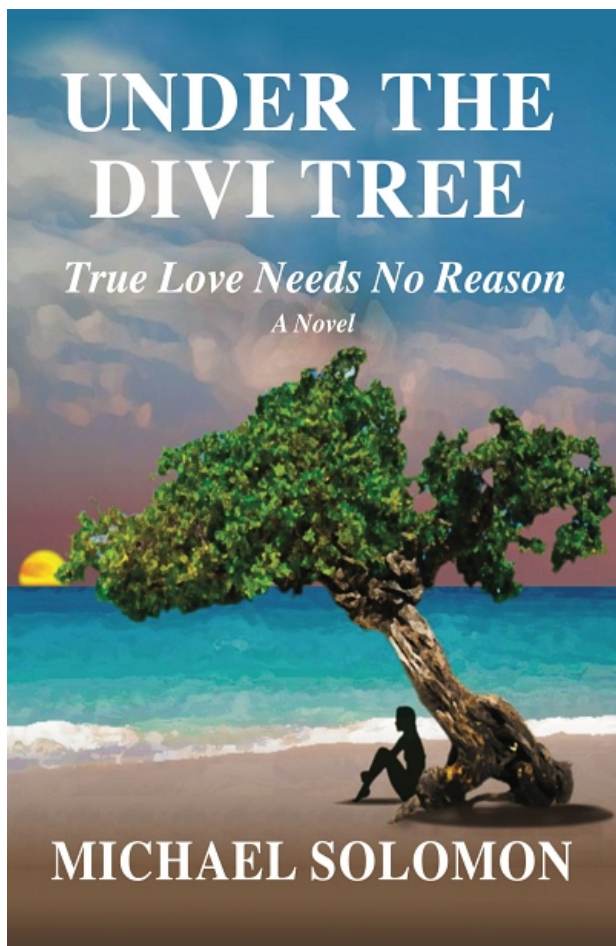
To learn more about Michael Solomon, visit
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“Success By Default – The Depersonalization of Corporate America”

“Where Did My America Go?”

“The Conversion Prophecy”



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