

(children, children)

by Jerry Ratch

Her name was Carrie. And yes, it was love at first sight. Yes, she was a client, and you were supposed to keep your hands off the clients. Everyone in real estate knew that. She came into my office and took a seat in the reception area. I had a listing on Cedar Street she wanted to take a look at. I glanced over at her from my desk. She was short with dark hair and dark eyes, shy as they come, looking down. Very nicely built, I could see that at a distance. When she stood up, as I approached her, something in her body reached out and pulled the heart right out of mine. It was something, some heat, in her thighs, that whispered “children, children” to mine. I felt the tug at my midsection. This had never, ever happened to me before. I remember thinking all of a sudden, *Oh, my God, she is the mother of my children!*

It kind of scared me, and yet attracted me from my middle section at the same time, because I never thought I wanted to have “children, children, children.” Of my own, that is. I'd had enough raising three children belonging to someone else. I'd already done my tour of duty, or so I thought. But maybe here was the love of my life. It was definitely love at first sight. I remember trying to catch a breath before speaking to her. But I felt sort of sick, and I heard my heart saying, “You shouldn't do this. You shouldn't do this.”

Suddenly I got cramps. “Excuse me,” I said. “Sorry.” And I ran into the bathroom before we could talk. But not before I saw the look on her face. She was so pretty it hurt. I had a difficult time speaking to someone that beautiful. I don't know — I didn't feel worthy.

I couldn't let her know anything. I went to the bathroom and splashed cold water in my face. I looked in the mirror. My face had grown so red that I realized right then I had to do something about my drinking.

