

A blue-tinted photograph of a handgun, possibly a Glock, held in a hand. A film strip is looping around the top and left sides of the image. The background is dark and textured.

THE  
PHOTOGRAPH

KEITH MANTON

# The Photograph

KEITH MANTON



Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co.

Copyright © 2013  
All rights reserved – Keith Manton

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or by any information storage retrieval system, without the permission, in writing, from the publisher.

Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co.  
12620 FM 1960, Suite A4-507  
Houston, TX 77065  
[www.sbpra.com](http://www.sbpra.com)

ISBN: 978-1-63135-272-0

Interior Book Design: Judy Maenle

This is the story of Englishman Ray Martin, who has lived and worked in the USA for a number of years. After a divorce and a difficult time of adjustment, he moves to a new location to take another job and his life changes for the better. He meets a much younger woman, Grace, with whom he falls in love. After a wonderfully happy two years together, they move to the Washington DC area to follow her career in the defense industry. They rent a condo, owned by a secret service agent who has been temporarily relocated to another area. When moving in, Ray discovers in the back of a cabinet a 35-millimeter camera that still has film inside. He jokingly tells Grace they should develop it to see what the former owner may have been up to, but she firmly rejects such a move despite the subject being discussed in jest. After a few weeks, however, Ray's curiosity gets the better of him; and without Grace's knowledge, he decides to take the film to be developed. What he discovers on the film is devastating and plunges both of them into a tumultuous adventure that involves the FBI, the CIA, and Britain's MI6, as well as international espionage and corruption at the highest level of government. The situation gets even more complicated when Ray makes further discoveries that test his loyalty to his adopted country and his relationship with Grace. How he deals with the avalanche of events and the danger they are exposed to provide a fast-paced adventure in which both of their lives are put in acute jeopardy and nothing is what it seems.



# Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my friend Alice Woods, who read the first half of the unfinished manuscript and convinced me it was not a lost cause. She insisted I had to finish it because she just had to know what happened next.

Thanks also to my friend, Miriam De Priest, for her first edit of the manuscript using her years of experience correcting documents written by various CEO's for whom she has worked and who had English composition skills similar to my own.

I want to thank my son-in-law, Jeff Miller, who did a great job with the design of the cover. Take a look at his website to know why I put my trust in his creative skills: *ninezero8 design studio*.

Colonel John Lawrence, US Army (ret.) provided the technical training on the weapons involved and helped to prevent me from shooting myself in the foot, metaphorically speaking, so that my thanks go to him.

Finally, a very big thank you to my family and friends, as well as to all the people who know me through my long (and sometimes torturous) business career, who I just know will buy the book, if only out of curiosity.



# The Photograph

KEITH MANTON



# Contents

CHAPTER 1: Love at First Sight	1
CHAPTER 2: The Discovery	11
CHAPTER 3: Covering the Tracks	23
CHAPTER 4: The Wheels Coming Off	33
CHAPTER 5: The Reporter Knows Something	53
CHAPTER 6: Belly of the Beast	62
CHAPTER 7: The Big Day	75
CHAPTER 8: Captured	83
CHAPTER 9: Drastic Measures	91
CHAPTER 10: Love Lies-a-Bleeding	97
CHAPTER 11: On the Same Team	113
CHAPTER 12: Snap Decisions	122
CHAPTER 13: Worst Nightmare	135
CHAPTER 14: On the Mend	148
CHAPTER 15: Back to Reality	163
CHAPTER 16: Countdown to Revenge	178
CHAPTER 17: Into the Lion's Den	197
CHAPTER 18: Final Twist	205
CHAPTER 19: Back to Normal?	213



## CHAPTER 1



# Love at First Sight

Ray gently eased his head to his side trying to see the dim red numbers on the bedside clock without disturbing her sleep. Sleeping in on a Saturday morning was a rare treat for her, and he did not want to spoil the moment. They had been together now for just over two years, but it seemed like just days ago that they had met and fallen in love.

Love at first sight was a concept that he had never believed in, but now he was a believer. He had not been looking for another relationship; but Grace had taken a keen interest in him, even though she had been with someone at the wine tasting where they first met. It was still a wonder to him that Grace had singled him out at that tasting; and he was eternally grateful that she had, for he would never have initiated a conversation. Now he was happier in a relationship than ever before, and he wanted to keep things the way they were.

After two marriages for him and one for her, they were taking it slowly; but it was clear to him that this was a different kind of love. He thought he had loved the first time, but now he knew that he had stayed in that marriage out of familiarity and a sense of duty to keep his promise to take care of the children.

He had met his first wife when he was twenty-one and still in the Navy, and back in those days the expectation was to marry and have kids. It had seemed right then, but they were just kids themselves not really understanding what they were getting into. Now, more than thirty-five years later, he understood why it had ended when it did, long after it might have had he not wanted to avoid the distress to his children.

His children were now grown with their own families; and the woman, still asleep by his side, was barely older than his son, the eldest of his two children. It had taken the kids a little while to warm to her, especially after his second marriage to a woman named Angela, also much younger. Angela had joined the same company for a while; and although she knew he was much older and still settling his affairs with his ex-wife, they had become close. She was angry and upset at the end of a bad relationship, and they confided in each other at work when they were both in the office long after it had closed. He had felt that because she was a career girl, unlike his first wife, their marriage would be more equal and that she would appreciate what had to be done to move ahead in the business world. He had tried hard to make it work, but different needs and different ideas about what each wanted eventually wore down their relationship.

They had not been married for long when he was asked to move to the US in a company transfer. Angela had agreed, but in so doing gave up her career because Ray's temporary work visa in the US did not allow her to be employed as an accompanying spouse. Within two years they were granted green cards, which enabled Angela to seek work, but by then her desire to get back into her career had waned.

He had thought she would soon fit in and adapt; but when the temporary transfer became a permanent assignment, her longing for the old country became too much. Eventually, they decided to go back to the UK, and he agreed to resign from his job as General Manager of a lumber distribution company once they could arrange things back home.

The job with the lumber company had already been a compromise to limit the travel, which had been a major issue with his previous job. It did not, however, deliver the opportunity for advancement that he felt would have come from his sacrifice and commitment to his previous employer. Moreover, it did not improve his and Angela's relationship, since the fundamental cracks were too deep to paper over.

Eventually, Angela returned to England and found a place to live while he carried on at his job to keep the cash flow going

until he could get a position lined up for himself. They sold their house in Atlanta to take out the capital to buy a home in the UK and shipped their household goods into storage ready for when they had a place. Ray lodged with a divorced friend who had a home nearby in Atlanta with plenty of room and who was glad of a little extra company and income.

Being on the wrong side of fifty and out of the market for several years did not bode well for Ray to walk back into the kind of senior position he had left. The weeks and then months dragged on until before he knew it they had been four thousand miles apart for nearly two years, with only a few visits in between. In desperation, and to force himself to increase his job-searching effort back in the UK, he finally resigned his position and booked a flight for just days after his leaving party.

The phone call asking him not to come home felt like a knife between the shoulder blades. Why did she wait until now to tell him it was over? To let him give up his only source of income? Moreover, he had sold his prized Jaguar XJS in preparation for leaving, and that he found hard to forgive.

His first divorce had been a simple affair: he had gathered his clothes and a few books and left. He gave up the house, which was pretty much their only real asset, and custody of the children, who were by then almost adults, and walked away. He avoided paying alimony but kept up the mortgage payments for a year until she could get on her feet. He had felt guilty about his decision to leave, but the years of living in a state of just getting along, with no real passion, had worn him down.

With Angela, things were different. That divorce caused much more to worry about, including the hit that his retirement funds took. Also, the house they had bought in the UK could not be resold without a serious loss, so he agreed to make it part of the settlement.

He needed to find a new job in a hurry and get back to rebuilding his life. The experience left him cold and unmotivated; he sat around for days wondering where he might go. His friend tried to cheer him, and they took a couple of trips to

watch some motor sport, one of his keen interests; but he felt a sense of hopelessness and that made it hard to lift his spirits.

Finally, he got a call from an old work colleague telling him he knew of a company looking for an experienced guy who could hit the ground running. This was with a small start-up venture in the chemical business, an industry he knew well. The only downside was that it meant relocating near to Houston, and as he was painfully aware of the cultural limitations of this open air sauna, having visited his old company's manufacturing plant there several times. He had some reservations but decided to go anyway. Desperation and financial need are strong drivers; so when he called and was invited to fly down to interview and learn about the job, he thought, *What do I have to lose?* He went down a few days later and soon discovered these people needed to move quickly. The company had a French parent company that was gradually buying out the three original owners charging them with entering a new business segment with new products that they had little or no knowledge of. This was Ray's major knowledge base, and it took little time for him to convince them he was worth the hundred-and-twenty-thousand he had been used to with his previous employer.

After shipping most of their household goods to the UK and giving them up in the divorce settlement, Ray needed only a small U-Haul trailer to hook up behind the little Audi A4 he had purchased after he had parted with the XJS. He managed to convince himself that it would have been a tragedy to fit a tow hook to the Jag and that he could always buy another now that he was a free man. An old leather love seat, some bedding, plenty of kitchen equipment, and an ancient vacuum cleaner, which had been cluttering up his friend's basement, along with his CD collection and clothes, were all he had to his name for the eight hundred and fifty mile drive.

He arrived on New Year's Day to an eighty-degree temperature and checked into the Holiday Inn Express, a mile from the apartment he had found on his home search trip two weeks before. He needed to buy some basics before he could move into the apartment, like a bed and a few other essentials.

\* \* \*

Life took on a sort of elongated, temporary nature; and the job he had taken was, in his mind, a stopgap. The apartment was rented, and the car was just a run about until he got himself sorted out. He felt like he was outside of himself looking in and wondering what might happen next almost as if it was all outside his control.

He thought life had certainly dealt him a bad hand and it was only fair that things should improve. Even buying himself another Jaguar convertible for weekends had not made him feel much better; but after a year around Houston, he had felt the need to indulge himself. *Why not?* he thought. He deserved something for just being there.

\* \* \*

Then one evening he met Grace and his world changed. She was slim and elegant with high cheekbones and dark brown eyes that probed deep into his as they sat opposite each other at the table. He had noticed her the moment she had entered the room, as had most of the other men. She wore heels giving her a poised and sculptured elegance.

It was a private wine and food-tasting affair, and he had gone along with no expectation of anything other than finding a new favorite wine. Now his senses were alert as he felt a heat inside that made his heart race. For a few moments, their eyes met, and he was sure she noticed his attention. Was this beautiful girl, maybe thirty at most, really interested in him?

She had arrived with someone who was sitting several places to her left, but he said little and seemed remote. The hostess was always keen to mix people up at these tastings, several of which he had already attended, as had Grace with her ex-husband, Frank, Ray later found out. They occasionally socialized when she was in town for business trips.

During their first conversation, he learned that she worked for a defense contractor and had moved on a temporary assignment

to St. Louis for a promotion, which would eventually take her to company headquarters near Washington DC. Looking at her, he found it hard to believe that this slight girl, who looked hardly old enough to be out of college, was some kind of senior manager in a multi-billion dollar industry.

The evening went by quickly, and it was as if no one else was in the room as he focused all of his attention on her. She asked him about his work, his family, and his home in England; he felt at ease giving her much more information than one might expect a stranger in these circumstances. Before he knew it, it was time to leave. They exchanged business cards as they walked to the parking lot.

Frank shook his hand avoiding eye contact, but Grace leaned forward and kissed his cheek as he held her tiny hand to say goodnight. He returned the kiss and said he would look forward to seeing them at another tasting, really meaning seeing her. It was a warm night, so he left the convertible top down on the Jag. He climbed in and pulled forward to exit the parking lot trying not to make it look so obvious that he was almost screaming with joy. He felt her eyes follow him as he drove slowly away and he glanced in the rear view mirror to catch one last look.

She had penetrated his psyche to a level he had never felt before. There had been other meetings with other women, mostly at wine tasting events; but none of them had reached into his soul as Grace had.

Until now, he had still been harboring lingering hopes that his ex-wife back in England would change her mind. He had heard that her relationship with a new guy she had met had taken a bad turn. Despite the fact that he knew she had treated him unfairly, he still felt their relationship was unfinished business. They had kept in touch and she seemed warmer toward him, reminiscing about the good times, of which there had been plenty. Now, though, he was suddenly transformed; all he could think of was those haunting dark brown eyes and the warm kiss on his cheek.

The days and then weeks passed. He had typed several e-mails to her address, but he always deleted them before send-

ing them. It was as if he could preserve the moment by not making contact for fear of being rejected. Why would this beautiful, young, talented girl be interested in him? He was twice divorced, a little overweight, and not particularly well heeled financially now that he had parted with a serious chunk of his retirement investments.

He found it hard to eat and began exercising more to try to get in better shape. Before long, he realized he had lost about fifteen pounds and was feeling much fitter and looking better too.

It was exactly four weeks to the day when he got an e-mail from the restaurant advising him that they were planning another wine tasting dinner in a couple of week's time. The thought of those dark brown eyes and soft lips that had brushed his cheek was overwhelming; so as soon as he got home from work, he picked up her business card, which had been in full view by his keyboard since the night she gave it to him, and began to draft an e-mail.

He pondered whether to be direct and make it clear he was asking for a real date or to be casual and write, Hey, hope to see you and Frank at the tasting on the 15th. In the end he fell somewhere in the middle, asking if she would be coming and making it clear it was her he was looking forward to seeing.

He had been sitting by his computer for several minutes when he heard the familiar ping of an incoming e-mail. He paused for a moment almost afraid to open the message should it be bad news. After a couple of minutes, he opened it. The message was an "out of office" auto reply saying she was traveling and would be back in the office the next day. His heart sank wanting to know if his advance would be rejected out of hand or if it would contain enough to keep his hope alive.

The night passed slowly with little sleep, but the next morning he opened his e-mail at work and immediately saw a message from her work address. It was sent just minutes past eight, meaning that she responded as soon as she had seen his message. He read it quickly, scanning the message to see if there was any hint of reluctance in her words, which would tell him this was a lost cause. On the contrary, she said that she had

hoped he would e-mail or phone, that she would definitely be at the tasting on the 15th and that she was looking forward to seeing him there.

He knew now, but hadn't then, that she had been waiting for him to call and as soon as she knew he was intending to go to the next tasting, she booked a flight to Houston for that weekend.

This time she came alone, and they sat together as a couple. Once again the evening went quickly; but this time the hostess, Mary, took the party back to her house for a few of her closer friends, and they were included in the group.

It was an early fall evening, but a nice sea breeze made it comfortable so most people wanted to be outside on the deck. He and Grace, however, stayed inside and talked into the late hours until she suddenly got up and beckoned him to dance to a slow song playing in the background. He pulled her close to him as they began to dance and felt her heart beating quickly through her thin silk dress. He tried to stay calm, but the feeling welled up inside; and without waiting to see how she might react, he raised his hands, lifted her face to his, and kissed her on the mouth.

The kiss lasted for at least a minute, and her response was deep and affectionate as if she had been waiting for a true sign that he was really interested in her. There was no doubt in his mind now that she wanted him, and he wanted her too. They danced some more but now holding each other very close. He kissed her several more times, and the passion in her response left no doubt in his mind that she was very aroused. Then she grabbed his hand and walked toward a back bedroom, away from the front windows that looked out to other partygoers on the deck overlooking the bay.

Once out of sight standing in the shadows of the hallway, they embraced again kissing passionately; but this time he moved one hand to the hemline of her short dress, feeling the bare flesh just above her knee. He felt her legs move slightly apart giving him room to let his hand rise up between them. He pressed his fingers to her, and he felt the wetness through the flimsy material. He moved the narrow strip aside with one finger

and found her clitoris with another. She was very moist, and his fingers moved easily over her as he gently rubbed the tiny hard spot of her womanhood. All the time their mouths were pressed together with tongues probing deeply; and then after several minutes, she pulled her mouth away and arching her back, she moaned and pushed her hips toward him and climaxed. He felt her body go from the rigid tight hold on him to a limp rag doll, and her mouth again clasped on his, her tongue flicking inside his lips.

At that moment a voice called, "Where are you guys?" It was Mary, who by now was wondering where two of her guests had disappeared to. Ray called back in a faltering voice that they were in the back but coming out. Grace quickly straightened her dress, and without speaking, she turned and walked ahead of him back into the other room to see Mary filling her glass at the breakfast bar. "I won't ask what you guys are up to in the dark," Mary said in a joking voice. Grace told her they were just dancing in the dark. Mary smiled and rejoined the crowd on the deck, so they danced again slowly and embraced for quite some time without speaking. It did not seem to attract the attention of the other partygoers outside, so they guessed Mary had not shared her discovery with the others.

When they were alone again, Grace had looked into his eyes and asked that they be discreet, at least for now, as her ex-husband was a regular at the restaurant and she did not want to rub his nose in the fact that she was seeing someone so soon after their divorce.

So when some of the other guests came back in for an air conditioning fix and fresh wine, they resumed a more casual demeanor and continued to chat, sitting at the breakfast bar. During the rest of the conversation, she finally told him that she had just turned thirty-seven; he found it hard to believe given her youthful appearance.

They stayed until most of the guests had left; and after thanking Mary for a great party, they walked down to their cars parked outside on the street. Without a mention of what they had just experienced, they stood looking into each other's eyes.

Keith Manton

Not to pressure her to move the relationship too fast, he decided to give her the chance to go home alone to the house she still owned with her ex.

Grace stepped toward him; and raising her face to his, she asked, "When can you come and see me in St. Louis?"

He replied that he could come for a weekend in two weeks time. He had a travel commitment that would make it difficult to change flights for the next week. She said she was pleased and would look forward to spending some time together and getting to know each other better. With that, she kissed him on the lips, though fleetingly, then got into her rental car, and drove away.

He stood for a moment watching the tail lights disappear down the street, his mind in a complete turmoil. He was elated and still aroused, as he thought of this beautiful young woman naked in his arms, alone, in private, and wanting to make love to him.

Buy the B&N e-Pub version at:-

<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-photograph-keith-manton/1114759244>

Buy the Kindle version at:-

<http://www.amazon.com/Photograph-Keith-Manton-ebook/dp/B00KN9UMTM/>