



Lost Love Found

Tim Gomes

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Tim Gomes's *Lost Love Found* is billed as a romance, and it certainly is, but it is also a bit of crime thriller, carrying a strong thread of intrigue.

It's been two years since Dan Jagger's wife died when Flight 93 crashed in Pennsylvania on 9/11. Dan is still struggling to pull his life together when his former high school sweetheart, Darlene, calls out of the blue and asks to get together. Dan isn't interested in the least. Alia had been Dan's wife for more than thirty years, and his grief is crushing. Instead, he thanks Darlene for breaking up with him so long ago, which opened the door for him to meet Alia. But Darlene is persistent—insistent even—and Dan, unable to say no, reluctantly agrees to dinner at a restaurant that was his and Alia's favorite.

Dan's relatives, including his in-laws, get wind of the reunion between the former sweethearts, and not only do they endorse it, but they also do their best to push the couple together. Dan is unwilling at first, and Darlene seems oblivious to his reluctance, but they begin spending more time together. Soon Darlene is traveling to Dan's various homes throughout the country, and living a lifestyle she is unaccustomed to.

Dan's only son, Steve, whose feelings are complicated by loyalty to his mother, seems to be the only one with reservations. Steve checks into Darlene's past, uncovering some grim details that lead him to warn his father to stay clear of her.

Steve, an Army Reservist, is then sent to Iraq where he leads a grueling mission, after which he is reported missing in action. He resurfaces as a hero and plays a major role in the final scene which involves a ghost from Darlene's past. Gomes served in Vietnam, where he was awarded the Bronze Star. His experience allows him to bring authentic details into his tale.

With romance as the theme, readers expect a happy ending, and there is one, but the strong plot doesn't deliver the tension it could. Pacing issues rob the tale of suspense, and problems are solved before tension has a chance to build. Gomes misses a chance to turn the spotlight of suspicion on Darlene, and there are other moments that will leave readers asking, "But why didn't he...?" Dialogue at times becomes repetitive, overemphasizing things long since understood. Despite this, Gomes manages to land a big surprise at the end. The story isn't perfect, but it has a lot to commend it.

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